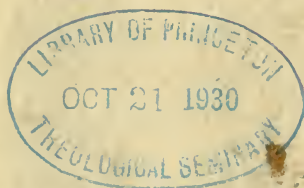




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Section

2079

Miracles of Jesus vindicated
agst Woolston in 4 parts
By D^r Pearce.

Trial of the Witnesses of the
Resurrection of Jesus agst Woolston
By Bp Sherlock.

Stebing's Defence of the Resurrec-
tion of Jairus's Daughter; y^e Widow
of Nain's Son; & Lazarus.

His Defence of our Saviour's
Miraculous Power of Healing.

Tracts against
Woolston.

4 in 1 v.

THE
MIRACLES
OF
JESUS
VINDICATED.

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Zachary Pearce

PART I.

CONTAINING

The Proofs of *Jesus's* Resurrection stated,
and the Objections to it answer'd.

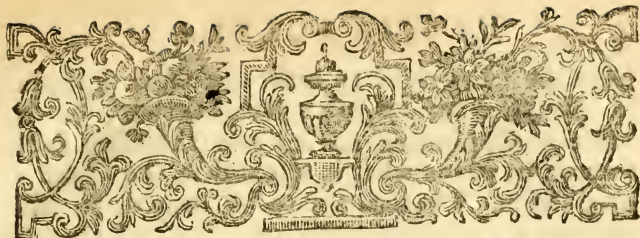
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THE
MIRACLES of *JESUS*
VINDICATED.

PART I.

HE Resurrection of *Jesus* being a Point of so great Importance, that the whole Weight of Christianity rests upon it, it is very necessary that the Truth of this Fact should be made out Clearly, and for that purpose the following Treatise is offer'd to the Reader, who if he comes to it with Attention and without Prejudice, may (it is hoped) be convinc'd of the Reality of this great Miracle, and be supply'd with a sufficient Answer to the several Objections lately rais'd against it.

The Objections have been formed from the History written by the four Evangelists, and therefore suppose that they wrote the Accounts which we now have under their Names; I

have the same right to make the same supposal in Defence of *Jesus's* Resurrection, as is made in Opposition to it; and therefore shall forbear to prove what is allow'd in the Question; when That comes to be deny'd, it will receive a Satisfactory Answer; but till then it must be taken for granted that the Books of the *New Testament* were written by those whose Names they bear, and are handed down to us the same as they were written.

Having premis'd this, I proceed to the Proof of the Fact in view, the Resurrection of *Jesus*; which is now made matter of Dispute (it seems) in a Christian Country; but since it is, Satisfaction ought to be given to all Enquirers, whether they seek it in Sincerity or not. The Books, which make this Enquiry necessary, are too well known to need to be particularly named. In them the Evangelists and Apostles are sometimes represented as *Fools* and *Credulous* men, sometimes as *Cheats* and *Impostors*: I shall therefore consider the Matter in both these Lights, not regarding upon whom One or Both of the two Characters may fall, if it should appear (as it will) that they don't in the least belong to the Apostles: And for this purpose I must follow the old Distinction (till a better can be found), and say, that, if the account given us by the Apostles be False, it must have been, either because they were Deceived Themselves, or because they knowingly Deceived Mankind.

I. That they could not be Deceived Themselves, in the Case before us, may be proved by the following Arguments.

After

After *Jesus* was risen, and before he was ascended, *he shewed himself alive* (to his Apostles and several others) *by many Infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* Acts i. 2.

More particularly, the sacred Writers make mention of twelve different Appearances of *Jesus*, and intimate that he was seen oftner. He Convers'd with them, and gave Answers to their Questions; he Ate and Drank with them, to shew that his Body was a Real one. *Luke* xxiv. 43. And when they suspected that what they saw might be a *Spirit*, he bad them handle *him and see; for a Spirit* (says he) *hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have.* *Luke* xxiv. 39.

And beyond all this, he submitted to such a close Examination as his Scrupulous Apostle *Thomas* insisted upon, for he permitted him to feel the Marks of the Wounds, which the Nails had caused in his Hands and Feet, and which the Spear had made in his Side.

And for a still farther Conviction, for a Proof which should pass all Possibility of deceiving, he told them (before he ascended up into Heaven) that they should *be endued with Power from on high.* *Luke* xxiv. 49. and *be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days after.* Acts i. 5. Which, according to the Prediction, happen'd to them at the end of ten days, when the *Holy Ghost* fell upon them, and *they all spake with Tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

In the Certainty of this Event they could not possibly be mistaken: they felt *within* them the wonderful Gift, the Power of speaking Languages

Languages till then Unknown to them. They had the same Evidence of their really having This, as they had of their being Alive. And is there any thing in Nature, which a man can be surer of? Even those, whose Scepticism has carried them so far, as to assert, that we cannot be Certain of the Existence of any Objects *without* us, must in this Case allow that the Apostles might be certain of what they felt by *inward* Perception, and had the same sort of Knowledge of, as they had of their own Existence.

Allowing then that they were sure of This, it follows that they were Sure of *Jesus's* having been rais'd from the Dead, and of their having convers'd with him after his Resurrection; for it was in one of their Conversations with him, during that period of time, that he promis'd them this *Gift of Tongues*; and the fulfilling of the Promise was a full Proof of his having been truly present with them, when he made it.

So that this Objection will not stand the Enquiry; But still it is said, that the Apostles and Evangelists were Cheats and Impostors, and that they knowingly Deceived Mankind in the Accounts that they have left in Writing.

II. Yet, as in the former Case it was proved (I think) to be Absolutely Impossible that they should be Deceived in this great Fact, so in This Case it will appear to be Morally Impossible that they should be Deceivers.

For they were at first twelve in Number, one of which Betray'd their Master, and was the cause of his Death; another Deny'd him
thrice

thrice at his Tryal, with Oaths and Curses declaring that he did not know him; and all of them shew'd so much want of Courage, such an Abject Fear, as that they forsook him and fled for their own Safety: Is it then probable in the least degree, that after such Proofs of the Baseness of some, and of the Weakness of all of them, they should be so far from being Suspicious of one another, nay should so far throw their whole Welfare into each other's hands, as all to agree and unite in carrying on an Imposture? Could they hope to be more Secure against being betray'd by each other than their Master was, who was the Centre of their Union, and for whose sake they had associated together? Could they be sure that there was no *Judas* still left among them? or that *Peter's* Cowardice, or their own strong Fears would not revive again upon some fresh Occasion? In a word, is it not against all Reason and Experience, that a Confederacy among wicked Men, when once broken thro' Treachery and Cowardice, should ever be renew'd among the same persons, and cemented again? so that in this view, if they had been Impostors, they must have been the Weakest of men too; and That (we know) is no part of the Character of such as can carry on a Imposture.

Besides, it is to be consider'd, that no Motive can be assigned for their Combining in such a Falsehood: It is (I think) universally given up, that neither Grandeur, nor Riches, nor Pleasure, were what the Apostles aimed at; the marks of the Contrary are too plain to be denied: but yet there are some who think, that they may fairly ascribe it to Vanity and the
Love

Love of being Singular; a Passion which they well know goes a great way in Themselves, and might therefore (they conclude) be as strong in the Apostles: but even that Vanity and that Singularity cannot be supposed to have a place Here, for this plain reason; because the Doctrine which they taught, they taught not as their Own, but as their Master's: they were only his Messengers; and therefore, if it succeeded to their heart's wish, they could expect no Reputation as the Inventors or first Discoverers of it, and they were too many in Number to affect to be Singular in this point: Here then is a Consideration of great Weight in the Enquiry, for if the Objection be strip'd of this suppos'd Motive, it will be Morally Impossible to assign any other.

But above all things, it must be insisted upon as a Proof of their Sincerity, that the whole Number of the Apostles unanimously asserted this Fact of *Jesus's* Resurrection, and of their having seen him in all the Circumstances before related, in the midst of all kinds of Sufferings and Persecutions, even with their Dying breath, and when expiring under the Cruellest Tortures.

This is naturally as strong a Proof as a Fact is capable of; for Death is the utmost Tryal, the surest Test which human Nature can be expos'd to.

And it is no Abatement to the force of this Proof to say, **“that many Cheats and Criminals have asserted their Innocence and denied their Guilt in the utmost extremity of Death;”*

* *Winflet's Discourses*, &c, Part, 6. pag. 27.

“Death;” for the two Cases are so far from being Parallel, that they are exactly Contrary; such Cheats and Criminals being tempted to this Denial of their Guilt by the hope of *Saving* their Lives; whereas in the Apostles case the Only hope that they could have of *Saving* their Lives was by owning the Falseness (if it was one,) and acknowledging themselves to be Guilty, which is just the Reverse of what they did.

Nor can the abovementioned Proof be weaken’d by saying, that there are Instances of men, who have dyed for Errors as well as for Truths, and have given up their Lives in a Stubborn defence of Points, which others so heartily Abhorr’d, that they dyed rather than Receive them.

For tho’ all this be True, yet of what is it True? of Opinions and Doctrines only, in which men may be fully persuaded Contrary ways: but the Testimony of the Apostles concerning *Christ’s* Resurrection is a Testimony concerning a Fact, whereof they declar’d themselves Eye-witnesses; and let any Unbeliever produce one Instance (in all the Records of time) of a single man, much more of Twelve or more, Sober and Serious men, all chearfully undergoing the most violent Deaths rather than Recant what they Knew to be a direct Falseness. The Author of the *Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour*, Part I. quotes St. *Austin* as telling us that *such Works as Jesus did might be imputed to, and effected by Magick Arts*; but this Author Knows that St. *Austin* says no such thing, and, that we may not doubt of his Knowing it, he has plac’d that Father’s

words at the bottom of page 11.* from whence it appears, that he says not one word of the possibility of their being *effected by Magick Art*. Here now is an Attestation of a Fact, which the Author knew to be False; but would Mr. *W.* persist in 'This, if a Rope were about his Neck, and he going to suffer for This Falshood? especially, if to Recant, would save his Life, and his Refusal would certainly put his Sentence in Execution? I don't speak this as my Wish, but for Argument's sake only. And we may trust Him to answer the Question, and be Sure that the Reply wou'd be, What? do you take me for a Madman? — And do You take the Apostles for Madmen? Their Writings surely shew it less than His; and therefore we may conclude that Human Courage, or Obstinacy (let them call it which they please) cannot go so far: at least we are sure that the Resurrection has nothing near so Incredible in it, as this Supposition has which some have made against the Belief of it.

Upon the whole it may be said that there is no Fact in Nature, than can be so well proved and supported as This is; for to suppose the Apostles to have been Deceived, is to suppose a thing Absolutely Impossible; and to affirm that they were Deceivers, is to affirm a thing which is Morally impossible, *i. e.* Improbable in the highest Degree.

Thus I have laid before the Reader a direct Proof of this Fact, the Resurrection of *Jesus*; and if a thing be once prov'd in this way, Objections

* *Esi attestabantur Miracula, non desuissent (sicut & nunc mustitant) qui Magica potentia cuncta illa tribuerent. Contr. Faust. L. 12. c. 4.*

jections drawn from the Circumstances and Expressions of the History have very little weight against it; because Mens Ignorance or Inattention may be the foundation of these Objections, and plain Proofs are too stubborn to give way to such little Oppositions as these are.

However since Objections have been rais'd against the Reality of our Saviour's Resurrection, and they seem to deserve an answer, because they are drawn from the Circumstances of the Story as related by the Evangelists, I shall endeavour to give a full answer to each of them.

All that has been offer'd on this head, may be reduc'd to these four Objections :

That *Jesus* did not rise at the time that he had foretold.

That some of his Disciples did not Know him when he appear'd to them, or they Knew him by such signs as could be no Sure Marks of its being Him.

That he did not personally appear to the Chief Priests and Elders after his Resurrection, as (they suppose) he ought to have done for their Conviction. And lastly,

That the Stone at the mouth of the Grave being Seal'd, and the Seal being broken open, when the Sealers were not present, here is room to suspect a Fraud and Imposture.

Each of these shall be consider'd in its order.

I. §. First it is said, that *Jesus* did not rise at the time which he had foretold ; it was not (say they) *on the third day*, for that would have been on *Monday*, not upon *Sunday* or the *first day of the week* : much less was it *after three days*,

as one Evangelist expresses it; and least of all is it True (as they pretend) that he was *in the heart of the Earth three Days and three Nights*, which Yet he declar'd he wou'd be, as another Evangelist reports it.

But in answer to all this it may be prov'd (as it often has been) that all these Expressions, which are so many *Jewish* ways of speaking, are exactly agreeable with the Event, when they are rightly explain'd.

For doing which it must be observ'd, that the *Jews* counted their Days (I mean their Natural Days, or Days of 24 hours) very differently from what We do; for We reckon them from 12 o' Clock at night to 12 the next night; but They reckon'd from one Sunset, to the next Sunset, and all the time between them They called a *Day*, just as *Moses* did when he says, *the Evening and the Morning were the first day*, Gen. i. 5. and *from Even unto Even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath*, Lev. xxiii. 32.

Another thing to be observ'd on this head is, that they reckon'd (as indeed all nations do) any Part of a Day of 24 hours for a whole Day: to this purpose an eminent *Jewish* Writer (*Aben-Ezra* on *Levit.* xii. 3.) speaking of the Law for circumcising an Infant on the 8th Day, says, that if the Infant was born but *one* hour before the first Day was ended, it was counted for one Whole Day: And so for the same reason, was the Part of the Day that was pass'd, when it was Circumcis'd, if it was only *one* hour of the Evening with which that Day began. Reckoning then that the first Day began on our *Thursday* at Sunset, and ended upon *Friday* at Sunset; and (because our Lord dyed about three in the afternoon of That Day)

rec-

reckoning that part of a Day for a whole Day, by this means we have *one* Day; and *Saturday* is on all hands allowed to be another Day; and as the third Day began on *Saturday* at Sunſet, and our Saviour roſe on the morning following, that Part of a Day is fairly computed for the third Day, and thus the Prediction was fully accomplished.

It is no wonder indeed that the Goſpel ſhould be contradicted by ſuch Cavillers as theſe; but there is one, who might have expected better Quarter from them, and that is *Porphry*, as great an Enemy to Chriſtianity as the Heart of an Unbeliever could wiſh; and yet this Objection of Theirs againſt *Sunday's* being the third Day, gives the Lye to their Favourite *Porphry*, who in his Treatiſe call'd *de Homericis Quæſtionibus* ſays, 'Ο ληγέσης ἡμέρας ἐπιδημήσας, καὶ τὴ τρίτης ἑωθὲν ἔξωιων, τῇ τρίτῃ ἀποδημεῖν λέγει. καὶ τοι μίαν τὴ μέσῳ ὁλῶ ἐτέλεσεν. *He that is at home in the Evening, and goes abroad on the Morning of the Third Day, is ſaid to be from home on the Third Day; tho' there be only One Day compleat, which is the Middle one (a).* But we want neither *Porphry*, nor any other Author to prove the Propriety of this Expreſſion; for it is a way of ſpeaking, which We and all other Nations of the World uſe: What I have ſaid on this head, was chiefly to lead the way to what follows.

The Expreſſion *on the third Day* is about ten ſeveral times uſ'd in the *New Teſtament* on this occaſion, and therefore muſt ſerve for explaining the other Phraſes but once or twice at moſt made uſe of: ſuch is that of *Chriſt's* riſing *after three*

(a) Quæſt. 14. Edit. Argentor.

Days; the meaning of which expression is fairly shewn by what we read in 2 *Chron.* x. 5. where *Rehoboam* says to the People, *Come again unto me after three Days*, and yet ver. 12. we read that *the People came to Rehoboam on the third Day*, as the King commanded saying, *Come again to me on the third Day*: A plain Instance, you see, that both Phrases mean the same thing. (a)

As to the Expression of our Saviour's being *three Days and three Nights in the heart of the Earth*, *Matt.* xii. 40. from the foregoing Observations the Account of that is very Easy; for the *Jews* (like *Us*) had no One word by which to express a Day of twenty four hours, or a $\nu\upsilon\chi\ \delta\eta\mu\epsilon\rho\nu$ as the *Greeks* called it, i. e. a *Day-night* as We might call it. They sometimes stiled it a *Day*, as We do, but at other times a *Day and a Night*. So that we are to understand by the Expression of *three Days and three Nights* no more than that *Jesus* was to be in the Grave three Days (as We should express it) reckoning inclusively the first and the last for two Days, and counting the pieces of Days for Whole ones. And of this way of speaking there is a remarkable Instance in the book of *Esther*; for tho' in ch. iv. 16. she declares that she would fast with her People the *Jews three Days Night and Day*: yet we find her in ch. v. 1, 4. upon the third Day at a Banquet with the King and *Haman* her Adversary.

Notwithstanding therefore this Objection, it appears that *Jesus* rose from the Grave at the time foretold by him.

(a) So in *Cicero*n. *Tusc. Disp.* l. 1. we read, *Apollo se id daturum ostendit post ejus diei diem tertium; qui ut illuxit, mortui sunt reversi.*

2. §. The next Objection is, that his Disciples did not always Know him when he appeared to them: or they Knew him by such Signs as could not be Sure Marks of its being Him.

For the obviating of which it may be observed, that, tho' our Lord more than once in his Life time told them that he should be put to Death, and should *rise again on the third Day*, yet they then *understood not these things*; their hopes of a Temporal Deliverer were so strong, and they had built so much upon this false Notion, that, when they saw him Crucify'd, they immediately lost all Heart and all Expectation of ever seeing him again: and in this Consternation, under this Despair of Mind, if he had appear'd to them at Once, in such a manner as to put his Resurrection out of all Doubt, it is Probable that their Joy would have been too Excessive and Tumultuous for them to bear: He seems therefore to have chosen rather to discover himself to them by Degrees.

The first Step towards any Notice of this Miraculous Fact was, that the Grave was found open, and the Body gone.

Next they received an Account of his being risen from two Persons, who had the Shape of Young men, but had at the same time the appearance of a Brightness like that of *Lightning in their Countenances*; which gave reason to those who saw them, to suppose that they were not Men, but Angels.

After this *Jesus* appear'd to some of his Disciples, but it being not yet Day-light (*Matt. xxviii. 1.*) they mistook him for the Gardiner of the Place in which the Grave was, till upon looking more narrowly at him, they saw him
to

to be their Master; but *he presently withdrew himself*, leaving them little more than a Glimpse or bare View of his Person, as not designing yet fully to convince them of the Reality of his Resurrection.

At another time he appear'd to *Two of the Disciples*, as they were on their Journey to *Emmaus*; but it was (as the Evangelist says) *in another Form*. Mark xvi. 12. *i. e.* another than what they had been used to see him in, probably in the Dress of a Traveller, for it is said that *he went into the Country with them*. This Circumstance therefore, together with the Dusk of the Evening, (at which time it happened) and the Despair they were in of ever seeing him again, might contribute towards what is said of these two Disciples, that *their Eyes were holden, that they should not know him*, or rather (as it may be rendered) *so as they did not know him*. Luke xxiv. 16. till upon entring with him into an house, and sitting down with him to Supper, *their Eyes were open'd, and they knew him*; which discovery the bringing in of Lights for their Meal may probably have occasion'd; at least this is a better account of the matter than the Fanciful Supposition, which has been advanced, as if *Jesus* was then discover'd by *an habitual Motion and Action of his hand in breaking of bread*. At this time, tho' he gave the Disciples a farther proof of his being risen, yet they were only Two present, and he chose to stay a very little time with them after he was known to them; for it is said that *he straitway vanished out of their Sight*, or rather (as it is in the Margin of our Bibles) *he ceased to be seen of them*:
by

by which no more need be meant than that he left their Company and went away, without doing any thing more than is naturally in the Power of Bodies to do; just as the word *disappear* (an Equivalent one) is us'd by *Milton*, Book VI. 414.

*Satan with his Rebellious disappear'd,
Far in the Dark dislodg'd.*

Where it is not meant that he made himself Invisible, but that he withdrew out of sight.

In all these Appearances of our Saviour to his Disciples, there is no Christian who pretends that he gave them a Full and Satisfactory Proof of his Resurrection: They were but so many Steps to lead them on; they were only the Degrees by which he chose to prepare them for a farther Discovery, and are therefore (I think) a good Reason why more than once they were not aware of his being their Master.

And if, after all this, at another Appearance of his *they supposed that they had seen a Spirit*, ver. 37. he went a greater Length towards convincing them, by *shewing them his Hands, and his Feet, and his Side*; and appealing to them whether a *Spirit had Flesh and Bones, as they saw him have*.

The last Satisfaction which he gave them in this particular, and which (as the Story relates) put an entire end to All Doubt among them, was his allowing the Apostle *Thomas* not only to *see*, but to *handle* him, and *feel* the marks in his Side, his Hands, and his

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Feet,

Feet, which the Nails and the Spear had made, when he was on the Cross: Upon This they were All fully convinced; and every time afterwards, when they saw Him, they made no Scruple to own and receive him as *Jesus* risen from the Dead.

If it can be made appear, that, after this ample Discovery, any of the Disciples did *not* know him, when he was Present with them, there will be some weight in the Objection; but at present every Instance that has been given of such Behaviour in the Disciples towards their Master, is taken from those Appearances of his which were prior to the above mentioned one, when *Thomas* (the last of the Apostles who stood out) received such strong Conviction.

And is it fair Dealing to pass over those Latter appearances in which the Apostles declare that they had full evidence, and to object his Former Imperfect appearances as not Satisfactory? Why, the Apostles acknowledge that at First they believ'd not, but the same Writers say that they believed Afterwards, and give us their Reasons for it: and shall the One Story of the Apostles be credited, and the Other not?

I can see no Reason why these Objectors should like their Testimony in the First case better than that in the Last, except that they were then *Unbelievers*; That perhaps They may look on as Merit, and reckon that the less Faith they had, they deserv'd the more Credit. But is it not strange that in such a Case a man's Evidence should be turn'd against himself?

I met an old Acquaintance t'other day in *Westminster-Hall*, whom I did not know at first; I was talking with him for some time, 'till at last recollecting my self I called him by his name, and we immediately knew each other, and fell to discoursing upon several things that had formerly passed between us, and upon the Circumstances and Welfare of several of our Common Friends. Shall any one tell me now, that this man was *not* the old Acquaintance that I took him to be, and use for his Argument, That I did not know him at First? What's that to the purpose? I knew him before we parted, and knew him by such Sure Marks, as I could not be Deceived in. There are few men of so cool Tempers as not to be provok'd at such an Arguer as This; and what He might call a Conclusion of his own Reason, They would look upon as an Affront to Theirs. But I have done with this Objection, and proceed to

3. §. The Third which I mentioned to have been made against the Truth of *Jesus's* Resurrection, and which was, that He did not personally appear to the Chief Priests and Elders, as some say he ought to have done for their Confutation.

But if I shew that This was not only *not necessary to be done*, but that there are good Reasons assignable why it should *not have been done*, a sufficient Answer will be given to this Objection.

It was *not necessary* to be done, because the Chief Priests and Rulers had seen enough to convince them fully that *Jesus* came from God,

if they had not been blinded with the most obstinate Prejudices: They had been Eye-Witnesses to many of his Miracles, and had but very lately (at his Death) seen *the Veil of the Temple rent in twain, and Darknes over the whole Land*: This would have been a full Proof to Them, if they had not been resolutely bent against admitting any.

But supposing that *Christ* had appear'd to them, and that they had believed upon seeing him alive after his Resurrection, what would have been the Consequence? Why, all the Proof of this Fact which they could have given to others, would have been their Testimony only; and Testimony We have Now for it, That of the Apostles, Twelve in number, who said that they All saw him, and not only said this, but wrought Miracles, and laid down their Lives in Attestation to the Truth of their Report. And could the Chief Priests and Elders (if they had been convinced) have done more than This for the convincing of Others?

Let us farther suppose, that Their being convinced would have carry'd such Weight along with it, that not only all the Priests and Rulers, but the Body of the *Jewish* People would have been converted upon Their Testimony: And let us suppose that upon this the Apostles or any other *Jews* had set out for foreign Countries, preaching the great Doctrine of *Jesus's* Resurrection, insisting upon This Proof of it, that not only They themselves, but the Chief Priests and Elders had seen him, and that the whole Nation was fully perswaded of the Truth
of

of it ; and producing Certificates to that purpose under the Hands and Seals of the great Council or *Sanhedrim*. If This had been the Case, can we think that those who now make Objections to the Testimony of the Apostles, would not have made much Greater and Stronger Objections to the united Testimony of the Nation? Would not they have found more room to suspect an Imposture than they can Now? Would not they have called it a State Trick, a Political Craft, a National Contrivance of the *Jews*, to patch up their Credit after they had so long talk'd of their *Messiah* that was to come? Would not That have been objected (which Now cannot), that a Fraud might easily have been carried on under the Shelter of the *Jewish* Magistracy? If all the Power of Authority in Religion had been on the side of this Fact, might it not be suspected that such as were Curious and Inquisitive to examine things to the Bottom, were intimidated and discourag'd from the Attempt? Would not such a general Union in Belief have pass'd with These Objectors for a General Conspiracy? and would they not have cry'd down the Fact, because it *had* This Circumstance attending it, much more justly than they now cry it down because it *wanted* it?

Providence takes it own Measures ; we are not to prescribe to it, which way was best or wisest : whatever method it should have pleas'd Heaven to take, it would not have fail'd to put its Designs in Execution ; but in the View wherein I have plac'd things above, there would have been ample Scope for Cavil, a large Field to sow the Tares of Doubts and
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Difficulties in. But will a Rational Man admit that for an Objection which is liable to more and greater Objections? Fie upon such Free-thinking! which Marrs instead of Mending, and like the New piece put into an Old Garment, *makes the Rent worse*. Mat. ix. 16.

So that all things consider'd, it was so far from being Necessary, that *Christ* should have appear'd upon his Resurrection to the Chief Priests and Rulers of the *Jews*, as has been suggested; that (according to all the ways of Thinking which these *Cavillers* are us'd to) he ought *not* to have appear'd to them. And God must be allow'd to have taken a more Unexceptionable Method in making this Fact evident to a Few Men only, and those of no Figure, Character or Reputation in Life, except (as the Event shew'd) for their Courage and Sincerity.

4. §. The last Objection which I mentioned runs thus: the Stone at the Mouth of the Grave being Sealed by the Chief Priests, and the Seal being broken open, when They were not Present, here (say some) is room to suspect a Fraud and Imposture.

But to make this Objection of any Weight, they must suppose that the Apostles, who were the Chosen Witnesses of the Resurrection, as well as the Chief Priests, who were the Denyers of it, were concerned in the Sealing; and that both Parties consented to this method as a Sure way to discover whether *Jesus* would rise or not: and that both likewise had engag'd to be at the Opening of the Grave on some Day and Hour appointed.

But

But all this Supposal is not only without foundation, but is directly contrary to the History; for the Apostles all fled for their Lives when their Master was Crucified; and when they met afterwards, they did it with the *Doors shut for fear of the Jews*: Nay so far were they from agreeing with the Chief Priests upon This or any other Test of his Rising again, that we are told in Scripture, that they did not expect him to rise again, and that for several days after his Resurrection they were *slow of heart to believe it*. And could This Sealing then be a Covenant enter'd into by the Apostles? Or could their Consent be *reasonably presum'd* to any Test of a Fact which they never expected to happen?

Besides, what Right had the Chief Priests to prescribe any Method for the Divine Power to act in? they *Sealed* the Grave, 'tis true; but the Treasure in it was none of Theirs: it was God's, and might not he open the Door of it, and take out his Own when ever he pleas'd? Where then is the Mark of Fraud, when God, the only Proprietor, was present at the opening of it? There may be Cavil in this, but there is no Argument, till it be made out that a Fact fully prov'd to Some Men is False, because other men have not received all the Proof which they desire. But according to this way of reasoning, it seems to be out of the Power of God himself to make any Fact appear to be True; because while he leaves men Free-will, they may (under the Colour of Free-thinking) make Objections, and insist upon unreasonable terms of Satisfaction: but These don't influence the nature of Facts, and therefore without any regard

regard to the *Seal* or the *Sealers*, we must assert that *Jesus* did truly *Rise from the Dead on the third Day according to the Scriptures*.

I have now gone thro' every part of what was at first propos'd, having shew'd by direct Proof that *Jesus* did rise, and having answer'd the several Objections against this Fact, which some have drawn from the Writings of the Evangelists.

The Evidence then of this Great and Miraculous Action lies fairly before the Reader. I have plac'd it in the Clearest Light that I could, and have brought the Proofs of it into a Shorter Compass than Usual: Both these are great Helps to any Sincere, Unprejudiced man, who would see the Reason of the Christian's Faith and Hope: It appears Absolutely Impossible (according to the Scripture Story) that the Apostles should have been Deceived in this Point of *Jesus's* Resurrection; which is no less than a Demonstration in their Favour: and it appears to have been Morally Impossible that they should have willfully Deceived Mankind in this Particular: the Circumstances of their Case will not admit of such a Supposition, and the whole Weight of Improbability lies against it, which is the strongest Proof that such a Distant Fact is capable of.

And will a Wise man think a few Cavils sufficient to determine the Point against such Evidence? When the Proofs are so much Stronger on the One side than the Objections on the Other, are there not greater Difficulties to be met with in Disbelieving than in Believing? When the weight is so great in Favour of the Resurrection, must not He that can really

remove it, have a great deal of Credulity, and (in this Sense too) a *Faith able to remove Mountains?*

Here then a Rational Man will take his Stand, and being once convinced that *Jesus* did truly rise from the Dead, from hence he will set out in his Enquiries, and taking this Clue along with him will easily see what Judgment is to be made of some other Particulars in the Gospel, against which Exceptions have been taken: With this Evidence in his hand, he will easily admit all the Miracles wrought by *Jesus*, when Alive, to have been True and Real ones: For the Divine Power (we may be sure) would never have exerted it self in his favour to Raise him again, if during his Abode on Earth he had counterfeited Miracles and imposed on a Credulous Multitude: And if he wrought Undoubted Miracles, will not this Conclusion necessarily follow, That he came from God, teaching the Divine Will, because he made use of his Miracles as so many Proofs of his having a Commission from Heaven?

And the same must be said of the Application of the Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, which *Jesus* and his Apostles declar'd to have been fulfill'd in Him: For however some of them may appear to Us, at this distance of time, not to be expressly determin'd and tyed down to His Person, yet no Sense of them can be clearer than what is given them by one who wrought undoubted Miracles, and thereby prov'd himself to come from that God, *who spake by the Prophets*; and therefore *Jesus's* Explication of them is no other than God's Own; and can we desire a better Interpretation?

In all Enquiries the only way to come at Truth is to set out right at first. There is no Proposition in *Euclid* or *Newton*, tho' never so strictly Demonstrable, but will lose all its Force of Conviction, if a man begins at the wrong end, disjoins the several parts of the Proof, or places them in a wrong and unnatural Order. It is the same thing in Christianity; if a man singles out a Miracle or a Prophecy, and having expos'd as Artfully as he can the Literal Story of either, if from thence he forms an Argument that These don't prove *Jesus* to have come from God or to have been the *Messiah*; he may to weak Understandings seem to say something Material, and may triumph (if he pleases) in the Quaintness of his Objections: For, no doubt, *every* Miracle of Christ Singly consider'd does not Infallibly prove his Divine Mission, nor does *every* Prophecy Singly consider'd point him out for the true *Messiah*. Exceptions may be drawn from the Circumstances of some of them by men dispos'd to cavil, and they may say that at best (when taken in this Separate view) they can only make us Wonder, not Believe.

But all this while Truth is Truth, and would appear so, if the Proofs were pursued in their Natural Order: Do but begin aright and follow in the Chain of things; and you have Demonstration: whereas if you Start wrong, or lose the Track, then Doubts and Difficulties meet you at every Turning, and you will soon have Stock enough to set up with, as a Modern Free-thinker.

This Question may fairly be asked, If we give up Christianity, what Religion will they
give

give us in the Room of it? Christianity is surely worth something, and a Man would not part with it except to Advantage. Why, *the Golden Religion of Nature* (a) is offer'd us in Exchange: but all is not *Gold* that glisters; it has been prov'd a thousand times, that Natural Religion is not sufficient for all our Wants, that it had one great Defect at least, which the Gospel remedies by promising Pardon and Forgiveness of Sins. But are they in earnest when they talk of setting up Morality for the Standard? If they were, one would think that their Writings, while they recommend it, should practise it, and the Example should go along with the Doctrine. But is not the Contrary visible in most of their Works? I will instance only in the Author of *the Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour*: one Specimen of his Honesty in Quotations I have given before in Page 10, which I hope will be referr'd to upon this occasion. And thus in *Part I. Pag. 25*, he says that *St. Hilary is plain that there was no such Market kept in the Temple of Jerusalem, i. e. for buying and selling Sheep, Oxen and Doves*: and for this purpose he quotes these words of that Father, *Non habebant Judæi quod venire possent, neque erat quod emere quis posset*. This is but a part of a Sentence, the whole runs thus: *Sed neque emere Judæos in Synagogâ, neque vendere Spiritum Sanctum existimandum est; non enim habebant ut vendere possent, neque erat quod quis emere posset*: We must not think that the Jews were able to buy and sell the Holy Ghost in the Synagogue; for they had

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(a) Woolston's Disc. Part. 6. Pag. 28.

it not to sell, nor was there any one to buy it. Here he deceives his Reader, concealing from him that the *buying* and *selling* mention'd by St. Hilary was that of the *Holy Ghost*, not of *Sheep* and *Oxen*, and the Place spoken of was not the *Temple* but the *Synagogue*. Is this Morality?

Again, he makes *Erasmus* say, that *Jesus* could not be zealous against the Profanation of that Temple of the Jews, which was soon to be destroy'd, p. 30. But the words of *Erasmus* have a quite different meaning, and run thus; *Nec enim illum tantopere commovebat Templum illud mercimoniis Boum, Ovium, Hircorum & Columbarum profanatum: Sed ostendere voluit Avaritiam & Quæstum fore capitalem Pestem Ecclesiæ suæ, quam Templum illud, cujus Religio mox erat abolenda, figurabat.* *Jesus* was not so much mov'd at the Profanation of the Temple by the merchandise of *Oxen*, *Sheep*, *Goats* and *Doves*; but he meant to shew that *Avarice* and *Luxury* would be a fatal Calamity to his Church, which was figur'd out by that Temple whose Worship was soon after to be abolished. The Author abovemention'd makes *Erasmus* assign the Temple's being soon to be destroy'd, as a Reason why he says that *Jesus* could not be Zealous against the Profanation of it: whereas *Erasmus* does not say this, much less does he assign a Reason for it: he only mentions the Temple's being soon to be destroy'd, as a Circumstance to shew that the Temple was a Figure of the Christian Church, which was to succeed it.—— Was there a greater Difference between *Erasmus* and the Monks of His time,

time, than there is between the True Sense of *Erasmus*, and what this Unfair Author would fix upon him?

Some other opportunity will be taken to add more Instances of the like Behaviour, but these are sufficient to shew that this great Recommender of the *Golden Religion of Nature*, in his attacks upon Christianity, violates the first principles of Natural Religion, and makes a Sacrifice of Common Honesty to his Zeal against Revelation. If his Morality teaches him no better things, I would advise him not to offer it to the World; it is best in his Own keeping, it may be of great use to Him in raising Objections against the Bible; nay it may be a *Golden Religion* to him, if by the help of it he can furnish his Discourses with such bold Falshoods as shall make them Sell the better. But to all Serious Men, to all who enquire and examine into every Hardy Assertion, his Book is their Antidote; by seeing what He is, they learn what such men as have cast off the Gospel are likely to be: He is the strongest Proof against Himself that Christianity is Necessary to restrain men; and there is nothing in his Writings of so much Weight to incline men to be Unbelievers, as there is in his Example to shew them the Necessity of Believing.

A Man must be much in Love with Variety, and wear his Religion, like his Cloaths, subject to every Change of the Fashion, if he will quit the Christian Faith, and renounce his Creed for an uncertain Something, so ill supported and so ill recommended as the Religion of these Disputers. When they have demon-

demonstrated the Falseshood of Christianity, or shewn us that the Objections against it are of more Force than the Proofs for it, then we may allow them (after great Examples in other cases) to spend their whole Stock of Wit and Drollery upon the Subject. But if they must be under a Restraint till then, it will all dye with them, and the World will lose the Proof of their Abilities in the Great Art of Ridicule: For as yet the Article of *Jesus's* Resurrection (that Foundation-Stone of Christianity) remains unmov'd by any thing that They have offer'd: They have done their Best, it must be owned, and have said all perhaps that the Wit or Malice of man can devise: But still it can no more prevail against this Truth, than Death and the Grave could against our Saviour; it rises like him, and triumphs over all Objections.

It is hoped therefore, that what has been said on this Occasion, will have some Effect to check the increasing Infidelity of the Age; and that men will consider and weigh matters, before they form any Judgment to the Prejudice of that Faith, which can plead Prescription, and (by shewing its Reasonableness) can make that Prescription appear a Good one. If the Proofs that I have brought in its favour are so convincing, as I am persuaded they are, let such men examine their own hearts carefully, and see whether other Motives than those of Reason do not determine them to Unbelief. I pretend not to charge it upon their Vices or their Vanity and Love of Novelty; they Themselves are the best Judges of what that Principle is which

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influences them: But they must give up the Presence of Reason (I mean of Right Reason) in this Case; for This lyes directly against them, it blows full in their Face; and that which is the Demonstration of our Faith, can never be the Foundation of Their Infidelity.

F I N I S.



THE
M I R A C L E S
O F
J E S U S
V I N D I C A T E D.

P A R T II.

C O N T A I N I N G

A Defence of the Literal Story of *JESUS's*
driving the BUYERS and SELLERS
out of the TEMPLE,

A N D

Suffering the DEVILS to enter into the
Herd of SWINE.

The SECOND EDITION.

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THE
MIRACLES of JESUS
VINDICATED.

PART II.

MY former Discourse endeavour'd to establish the Truth of that Great Miracle, the Resurrection of *Jesus*, and in pursuance of that Design I shew'd it to be Absolutely Impossible that the Apostles should be Deceived, and Morally Impossible that they should intend to Deceive Mankind : The Proofs of these two Particulars were Then laid before the Reader in so Short and yet so Plain a manner, that (as I am encourag'd to hope by better Judges than my self) they amount to no less than a full Demonstration of the Fact in Question.

In that small Treatise it was not attempted to clear the Apostles from the Charge of *Enthusiasm*, because what was There said, when laid together, seem'd a full Vindication of them in this Particular ; but since those who have got a Plausible Word on their side, are fond of making the Most of it, and affect to range the Apostles under a third Class, that of *Enthusiasts*, I shall follow them into this Covert, and try to force them out of it, by shewing how effectually all Suspicion of

Enthusiasm has been removed from them, by what has been already Prov'd on the Article of *Jesus's* Resurrection.

Enthusiasm in its only Proper Sense (when apply'd to Teachers) is the asserting something for Truth upon a Strong but False Imagination of being Divinely Inspir'd: you see then that the Subject, whereon the warm Brain of the *Enthusiast* displays it self, is Opinion and Doctrine only; but the Point in Question between Us was a Fact, *viz.* the Resurrection of *Jesus*, in which (as then appear'd) it is Absolutely Impossible that they should have been Deceived, they having such Proofs of it, as the Scriptures call, and I shew'd to be, *Infallible* ones. It must be observ'd that the Evidence, which They had of *Jesus's* being Alive again, was Sensible Evidence, Frequently repeated, and made Good to more of their Senses than One; and that *the Gift of Tongues*, which was the Divine Power *within* them, was only a Confirmation of the Goodness of this Evidence: They did not reason, as the *Enthusiast* does; This I teach for Truth of Doctrine, because I am Divinely Inspir'd; but, This I teach for Truth of Fact, because I was Eye-witness to it, and felt and handled it; and that my Senses did not Deceive me in that Outward Object I am sure, because I feel within me the Accomplishment of that Promise, which *Jesus* made me After his Resurrection.

Or take *Enthusiasm* in its less Proper Sense, and understand by it no more than a Man's being more strongly persuaded of the Truth of any thing than he has Reason for: and extend it (if you please) to Facts as well as Opinions; nay (rather than not allow it room enough to range in) suppose it to be an Odd and Extravagant Mixture of being Deceived and Deceiving too; Yet the Apostles are Safe, and their Testimony concerning *Jesus's* Resurrection can never be charged with any the least Suspicion of *Enthusiasm*: For my Discourse (if it Prov'd any thing) Prov'd that the Foundation, on which they built their Strong Persuasion,

suasion, was such as could easily support the whole Weight of the Superstructure: it was shew'd, that the Fact which they asserted for True, was not asserted upon the Force of a Suppos'd or a Real Divine Impulse only, but upon Sensible Evidence, of the Strongest kind; such as would have been in all Respects Sufficient, tho' Alone, but yet such as was (beyond any other Fact that ever happen'd) strengthen'd and confirm'd by a Divine Power within them: And (if any thing in Nature is Certain) This must be so, that such as are prov'd not to have been Deceiv'd or Deceivers, cannot come under the Censure of that which is thought a Mixture of both. Two Substances blended together don't constitute a third of a Distinct Sort, however it may have a Distinct Name: and a man would desire no better Proof that there was no *Punch* in the Glass before him, than to have it prov'd, that none of the several Ingredients which compose that Liquor, were to be found there.

So that, notwithstanding this Charge of *Enthusiasm*, it must be allow'd that the Testimony of the Apostles is True, when they tell us that *Jesus Rose from the Dead on the Third Day*, as he had foretold.

If this Point therefore be gain'd (and 'till I can see something Material offer'd against it, I may presume it to be gain'd), I have laid so strong a Foundation, that no Exceptions to any of the Miracles, which *Jesus* wrought in his Life-time, can be of Weight and Force enough to make a Reasonable and Unprejudic'd Person disbelieve them: For if *Jesus* wrought the Greatest of all Miracles in Raising himself from the Dead, a thing so plainly beyond all the Powers of Nature, a thing so seemingly Impossible, a thing which not only no Human Art could effect, but no Human Wisdom could foresee, can there be any Shadow of a Reason to doubt whether He wrought those Other Miracles, which have such visibly less Difficulties in them, and against which the very best Exceptions must be meer Trifles in comparison of the Former? If
before

before his Death he had plaid the part of a Cheat and an Impostor, is it Conceivable that God would have permitted him to Rise from the Grave; especially when in Proof of his Mission from God, and of his working Real Miracles, he appeal'd in his Life-time to this Great future Event, and plac'd his whole Character upon this Resurrection? Or can we imagine that his Disciples, who had such Strong, Sensible, Inward Evidence for the Reality of his having been Alive again, could have any Temptation to forge Other Miracles, and ascribe Actions to him which he never perform'd? Was it not Probable, was it not at least Possible, that they should be Detected in the Falsehood of Things, many of which they report him to have done in the most Publick manner, and before Numbers not only of his Followers but of his Enemies? And would not the Discovery of any One Miracle falsely ascrib'd to their Master have been an Invincible Prejudice against the True Miracle, which they witness'd to, and built their whole Scheme upon? The Resurrection, Alone, was a Convincing Proof that he came from God; and a Hundred True Miracles could not possibly have Added so much Weight to the Proof of it, as one False one, Detected, would certainly have taken from it. So that what room was there for Forgery, when the Only Method that the Apostles could use to gain Credit to the Resurrection which they were sure of, was never to report any thing of *Jesus* which they Knew to be False, or were not Sure to be True?

Here then is not only a Reasonable Presumption, but a Strong Consequence in favour of all the Miracles which are attributed to *Jesus* in the Gospels: Every Impartial Man must believe the Literal Account of them to be True, and the Miracles to have been Real ones, unless it can be made out clearly that there is an Absolute Impossibility in any of them. This is the only Case, which will allow us to make a Stand: For it is not sufficient to say that This or That particu-

particular Circumstance seems Absurd, because the Absurdity may arise from our want of Materials for Information: the Objection may owe its birth to Ignorance, and he who makes it, may have his Share of This as well as his Neighbour. Consider that almost 1700 Years have passed since these Miracles were wrought; the Climate and the Language, the Customs and the Genius of the People were very different from Ours; the Story is often told in a Short and Uncircumstantial Manner, and Allusions are commonly made to the History of those Times and to the Situation of those Places, which We are not fully acquainted with. On all these Accounts and many others, things may seem Strange and even Absurd to Us, which were the most Obvious and Familiar to the Natives of *Judea*.

But if we had no Helps at all to clear up these Matters against Objections, yet we might be said rather to be Without them than to Want them; for there is no Want, where there is a Direct Proof; and the Consequence from *Jesus's* Resurrection being a True Fact, to his Other Miracles being Truly wrought, is what no one can reasonably deny to be a Direct Proof.

However since Objections have been rais'd by Some against the Literal Story of almost all the Principal Miracles of *Jesus*, I am not unwilling to enter into a particular Examination of them, that the Reader may see how the Cavils of these Men are the Weakest and most Frivolous that can be conceived; such as the Meanest Author, that I ever met with before, would not Stoop to make use of; such as in any other Cause, but that of Religion, a Wise man would Contemn and Walk over: Nor shall the Unfair Arts, which They employ to give a Colour to these Cavils be forgotten in their proper place. I will venture to say, that were These open'd, and expos'd to their Readers (as they ought to be), Such Writers could never be able to bring any thing into Discredit but their Own Writings.

At present I shall confine my self to the Literal Accounts of the two first Miracles, which a late

(a) Author has undertaken to Expose; but in what Manner, and with what Success, the Reader will be soon convinc'd.

I. I begin (as He does) with *the Miracle of Jesus's driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple.*

All the Objections which he has rais'd against it are reduceable to these three heads.

That there was no Profanation of the Temple by Buyers and Sellers, as is pretended.

That, if there was, yet *Jesus* could not have executed such a Work as driving them out of the Temple.

That, if he Could have executed it, yet it was a Needless Work, because the Temple was so soon to be Destroyed and Polluted.

1. §. In Proof of his first Objection he brings the Testimony of St. *Hilary*, p. 25. that *there was no such Market kept in the Temple*: And for fear This should not hold, he quotes St. *Austin* as saying that *there could be no great Sin in Selling and Buying Things in the Temple, that were for the Use of it, and offered as Sacrifice in it.* But the Reader may remember that I have already convicted Mr. *W.* of False Evidence in this Quotation from St. *Hilary*, Part 1. p. 27. and I hope that for the future he will forbear to make an Affidavit-man of Him. And yet were This Quotation an Honest one, of what Weight could it be? Since the Testimony of the four Evangelists, who were Contemporaries, and upon the Spot, must be prefer'd before that of a Writer who lived some Hundreds of Years afterwards; especially in a Fact of so Publick a Nature, that, if it was False, the *Jews* in every part of the World could have Detected it upon their own Knowledge, because they went up yearly from every part of the World to the Temple to celebrate the Passover; and therefore could not but know whether at any Passover, at That particularly, such a Traffick was carried on in the Temple or not.

But

But I will give Mr. *W.* another Testimony of the Fact, such as even his Friend the *Jewish Rabbi* shall be forced to allow for a Good one: It is the Testimony of the ancient *Jews* themselves, who (we may be sure) did not relate the Matter falsely, to serve the Cause of the Evangelists. In the *Babylonish Talmud* it is declar'd that (a) *forty Years before the Temple was destroy'd, the Great Council remov'd* (from the (b) Place where they us'd to assemble in the Inner-Court of the Temple), *and sat among the Shops*. Count back forty Years from the Destruction of the Temple, and you will find that this Removal was about three or four Years before this Action of our Saviour's, and consequently that there was a Place called the *Shops* about that time. At the same time one *Jewish Rabbi* tells us Where these *Shops* were (c), *They were in the Mountain of the House*, by which the *Talmud* always meant the Outer-Court or Court of the Gentiles: And another tells us What they were, when he says (d), *That the Shops were an open spacious Place, where Goods were sold, and Money exchanged*: And frequent Mention is made there of the (e) *Tables of the Money-Changers*; upon which *Maimonides* tells us that (f) *he who Changed the Money, was called Trapezita in the Mishna* (g). Mr. *W.* as much Mr. *W.* as he is, will scarcely (I think) desire a fuller Proof of the Fact than This is.

(a) *Quadraginta annis ante Dissidium Domus migravit Synedrium majus, seditque in Tabernâ: (sec. aliam lect. in Tabernis Montis Sancti): Avoda Sacra. Edit. Edzard. p. 61.*

(b) *Migravit Senatus ab exedrâ lapidum casorum (loco, ubi olim habebatur Senatus) ad Tabernas, & à Tabernis ad Jerusalem. See L'Empereur upon the Codex Aliddoth. p. 48, 49.*

(c) *Ita enim R. Nathan, Locus erat extra exedram lapidis casi in monte adis, cui nomen Taberna. 1b.*

(d) *Nos autem solemus (dicit Elias) vocare locum adertum ad libera spatia, ubi vendunt merces, Tabernam; sic domus ubi mutant pecuniam cum feore, dicitur Taberna. 1b.*

(e) *Vicesimo quinto die ad mensas sedebant in Templo. 1b.*

(f) *Mensa, i. e. ad mensam, quæ est ante Nummularium sive Trapezitam, qui super ea accipit (pecuniam), & sic vocant eum, qui permutat pecuniam, Trapezitam in Mishna. 1b.*

(g) *Mishna. Edit. Surenhusii. Tom. 4. p. 338.*

But he seems aware that the Fact would be proved against him, and therefore brings in St. *Austin* as denying that This was a Profanation of the Temple: that Father's Words are, *Non ergo magnum peccatum, si hoc vendebat in Templo, quod emebatur, ut offerretur in Templo*, and then he goes on, *Et tamen inde ejecit illos: Quid si ibi Ebriosos inveniret?* &c. Now can any one think, that St. *Austin* meant to contradict *Christ*, and say that there was properly *no great Sin* in their doing that, by which *Jesus* said they had made the Temple *a Den of Thieves*? If he had, it would have been one of the Things which he should have put into his *Confessions*. But he meant only, that the Sin was not *so great* an one as some Others are, that it would be worse to be found there a Drunkard than a Seller of Goods: and what he seems thus to Excuse, is only *the Buying and Selling in the Temple Things for the Service of the Temple*, not (what our Saviour charges them with) the carrying on an Unjust and Unrighteous Trade there; so that his Apology for them as Merchants, does not vindicate them as *Thieves*.

By the *Temple* here is meant the Outer Court of it, or *the Court of the Gentiles*; which (a) *Josephus* (in his Description of the Temple) calls *the first Temple*, as he calls the Inner Court, where the *Jews* enter'd, *the second Temple*: and he tells us at the same time that the *Jews* did not look on this Court of the Gentiles as a *Holy* place: no wonder then, that they allow'd This Use to be made of it, which our Saviour found fault with. But yet this Opinion of the *Jews* concerning this Court was an Unworthy and Mistaken one; for it was a Part of the Temple in general, it bore the very Name of the Temple, and (what is more) it was the only Place that the Profelytes of the Gate, who came up to the Temple, had to worship the God of *Israel* in: for this purpose it was built very Large

(a) De Bello Jud. L. 5. c. 5. p. 1226. Edit. Hudf. Τὸ δευτερον
ιερον, ἄγιον ἐκαλεῖτο, καὶ τιμαρκαίδια βαθμοῖς ἦν ἀναβατὸν ἀπὸ
τοῦ πρῶτου.

and Spacious, that it might receive the great Numbers, which the *Jews* had reason to expect to see there; because *Isaiah's* Prophecy (ch. lvi. 7.) runs thus, *My House shall be a House of Prayer for all People*: which Prophecy our Saviour expressly (a) quoted against the Buyers when he drove them out, to shew them that their Practice was wholly Inconsistent with the View and Intent of it, which was that Profelytes from every Country under Heaven should come and worship There. It was a great misapplication therefore of this Court of the Gentiles, to use it for *Tables of Money-Changers* and for *Seats of them that sold Doves*, and for *Droves of Sheep and Oxen*, which St. *John* iii. 15. tells us were brought in There, and for which no doubt there were Folds and Stalls to inclose them, and separate the Cattle of the several Proprietors; and if we consider what Prodigious Numbers of all these there must have been in that Court (for *Josephus* (b) says that at one Passover *Cestius* computed three Millions who came there to celebrate it, exclusive of all those Profelytes who came there to Worship only) it will be easily conceiv'd how much the Place allotted to the *Gentiles* for Worship was crowded and the Room Lessen'd; which surely was a great Indecency: but it was a Profanation of it too, because in the midst of the Bleatings of the *Sheep*, and the Lowings of the *Oxen*, and the Hurry and Bustle necessarily occasion'd by the other sort of Merchandise, the *Gentile* Profelytes were sure to meet with no small Disturbance in their Devotions; and therefore this Practice of the *Jews* was a defeating (as far as they could) the accomplishment of *Isaiah's* Prophecy.

But the Case was still worse; for it seems Probable that the Captains of the Temple, who were Officers

(a) St. Matt. xxi. 13. has, *My House shall be called the House of Prayer*. St. Luke xix. 46. *My House is the House of Prayer*. But St. Mark's Words Ch. xi. 17. are the very same with the LXX. Translation of *Isai*. lvi. 7. and may be better render'd thus, *My House shall be called (or shall be) a House of Prayer for all Nations*.

(b) De Bello Jud. L. 6. c. 9. Edit. Hudson.

that had the Care and Charge of it, let out that part of the Court of the *Gentiles* for Profit and Advantage; and that the Sellers to make themselves amends for what they paid for their Shops and Stalls, made an Unjust and Exorbitant Gain. This however we are Sure of; that there was an Unrighteous Traffick carry'd on there, for our Saviour (as three of the Evangelists, who relate the Fact, assure us) does not charge them with having made the Temple a Place of Merchants only, but a *Den of Thieves*. In the former case if there was only an Indecency, yet in This at least it must be allowed that there was a Profanation of the Temple or Court of the *Gentiles*.

2. §. I proceed then to the 2d Objection, which was, How *Jesus* (if there was a Profanation) could have executed this work of driving them out of the Temple. *It is hard to conceive* (says Mr. *W.* p. 22.) *how any one in the Form of a Man and of a Despis'd one too, (and we don't read that Jesus chang'd his Shape), with a Whip in his Hand, could execute such a Work upon a great Multitude of People, who were none of them his Disciples, nor had any Regard for him.* And he quotes a *Modern Author* as thinking *This the most stupendous Miracle that Jesus wrought.* He that thought so, we know, was St. *Jerome*, just as much a *Modern Author* as Mr. *W.* is one of the *Primitive ones*, or speaks their Sentiments: But I don't care if I make him a Present of this Miracle, it may do his Heart good to have the Number of them lessen'd; and if he can but get one Miracle given up, he will perhaps forgive me, when I shew that what he reckons the Greatest of all, might have been None at all.

I will let him see then how *Jesus* was plainly able to do, what he is said to have done, in a Natural way, and without the Help of any Divine Power.

And here it must be remembred, that *Jesus* was just come up from *Bethany* to *Jerusalem* in a Solemn Procession, in a sort of Royal and Triumphant manner:

He

He was attended on the Road and into the City with a very great Multitude (Matt. xxi. 8.) nay with *Multitudes that went before and follow'd*, ver. 9. and These went along with him into the Temple (as may be (a) gather'd from ver. 15.) and There proclaim'd as they had done on the Road, *Hosanna to the Son of David*, which was one of the Names of the *Messiah*. The Concourse was so great that *all the City was moved*, ver. 10. and even the Chief Priests were afraid of him and of the People too, because they *took him for a Prophet* and *were very attentive to hear him*, Matt. xxi. 46. Mark xi. 18. Luke xix. 48. and xx. 19. So that in what he did to the Buyers and Sellers in the Temple, he is not to be consider'd as One single Man only, but as at the Head of an Infinite Number of People, all acknowledging him at that time for their *Messiah* and *King*, and therefore ready to support him in any Reformation that he should attempt. The Traders

(a) The Words are, *When the Chief Priests and Scribes saw the wonderful works that he did, and the παῖδες Children crying in the Temple, and saying Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased*. Where by παῖδες is not meant *Children*, as we render it, but *Jesus's Servants and Followers*, those of his Train and Retinue. Thus Matt. xiv. 2. *Herod said to his Servants* παῖσιν, &c. and Luke xii. 45. *If that Servant say in his Heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the men-servants* τὰς παῖδας: and so Luke xv. 26. from which Instances I gather that παῖδες here signifies those who were the *Disciples, Servants, or Followers* of Jesus at that time: And what the Pharisees said in the following verse, *Hearst thou what these say?* seems to be the same with what they say on this occasion in Luke xix. 39. *Master, rebuke thy Disciples*. If the two Evangelists speak of two different times, yet the Pharisees seem to have desir'd him to rebuke the same Persons in both the Evangelists. It is scarcely to be suppos'd that only *Children* cry'd out *Hosanna* in the Temple, or that the Pharisees were so pleas'd with what *Children* only were saying. Besides, the word παῖδες does never in the New Testament signify *Children*, unless once or twice at most, and then the Age of them is specify'd; the proper word is παῖς or παῖδα. What led our Translators to give the word this sense here, is (I conceive) the Answer that our Saviour makes, *Out of the mouth of Babes and Sucklings thou hast perfected praise*; but the meaning of this is, God has chosen for the praising of him *Babes and Sucklings* in Knowledge, not with respect to their Years; for *Sucklings*, that cannot speak, cannot perfect praise.

then

then might well have retir'd for *fear* of him whom the Chief Priests themselves *feared*, as having such Multitudes in his Retinue and at his Command: They did but what was Natural; they gave way to a Superiour Force, which it would been in vain to have Resisted.

It is Easy now to *conceive*, how *Jesus* could do this: he was not Then in the Form of a *Despis'd man*, but rather of a Triumphant Monarch; he was attended with a much *greater Multitude* of People than there was to oppose him, a *Multitude* of People who were all his *Disciples* and Followers at that time, and who had the greatest *Regard* for him that men could possibly have, they looking on him as their *Messiah*.

I would not be understood, by what I have said above, to mean that there was no Miracle in this whole Affair; for tho' I allow none, where Mr. *W.* and his *Modern Author* place it, yet there Seems to have been one (tho' the Evangelists don't call it so) in the Unanimous Disposition of the People at That time to proclaim *Jesus* by the Title of the *Son of David* or *Messiah*.

The Fame of his having raised *Lazarus* from the Dead a little before went a great way, 'tis true, (*John* xii. 18.) towards filling Men's minds with this Belief; but yet so Universal, so Sudden, and withal so Short-liv'd an Acknowledgment of Such a Point, looks more like the Effect of a Divine Impulse than of any Natural Causes.

3. §. The third Objection was this; If *Jesus* could do this, yet was it not a Needless work to be so Zealous against the Profanation of that Temple which was so soon to be Destroy'd? No, because it was *not* Then Destroy'd: for is not every Place, that is set apart for Divine Worship, to be kept Sacred and Fit for that Use, while it is Subsisting? In such a Case we are to consider what things are Now, not what they are Hereafter to be: for what would have been a Profanation of the Temple, if it had been always to last, was equally a Profanation of it, tho' it was

to be soon Destroy'd; the Action is the Same under both Events, and is not in the least Alter'd by the Fate of the Place where it is done. 'Tis Ridiculous to talk, or think otherwise. If any man had Profan'd the Parish Church of St. *Bottolph Bishopsgate* about four years ago, and had been *Presented* for it by the Church-wardens of that Parish, would it have been thought a Reasonable Question to ask, Why those Church-wardens were so Zealous against the Profanation of that Church, which they were then getting an *Act of Parliament* to empower them to pull down and Destroy? While a Place stands appropriated to Divine Worship, it ought not to be Profan'd; This is the Answer which every Lawyer and every man of Common Sense would give on this occasion. And therefore *the Court of the Gentiles* which was a *House of Prayer*, ought to have been kept Free and Undisturb'd for that purpose, as long as it continued to be a *House of Prayer*, that is, 'till it was Destroy'd.

I have not here forgot that Mr. *W.* pushes this matter farther, and says that *Jesus himself came to Destroy the Temple*, and that he *permitted*, nay *commanded it to be filthily Polluted not long after.* p. 23. and this he mentions to make the Inconsistence (as he thinks it) the Greater: But He, I am sure, was never more Inconsistent with Himself than in This particular. For where does he read any thing Like this? which of the Evangelists told him that *Jesus either came to Destroy it, or commanded it to be polluted?* *Jesus* tells the *Jews* indeed in *Mark xiii. 14.* that they would see the *Abomination of Desolation*, but then he adds, that they would see it *standing where it ought not, i. e. in the Holy place.* Now this is only a Declaration of what would happen, and it is observeable that this Declaration is so far from being in Favour of Polluting the Temple, that it is directly Against it. Besides, if he had *commanded* it to be done, when the Temple was Destroy'd, *i. e.* almost forty years after his Death, then, when he *commanded* it, he must have been Alive again and
Risen

Risen from the Dead. Did This Author consider this when he oppos'd *Jesus's* Resurrection? What? Not Revive, and yet Act? I see that for the sake of an Objection to One Miracle, he can for a while allow the Truth of another, and does (as Conjurers are thought to do) raise a Spirit only to work some Mischiefs by his Help, and then lay him Quiet again.

I have now answered all his Objections, and I hope to the Reader's Satisfaction. As for his Quotations from the Fathers, I have no Mind to lengthen this Discourse with any Enquiry into them: for tho' it is True that They affected to give a Spiritual and Mystical Sense to This and almost all our Saviour's Actions, yet it is as True that not one of them ever Deny'd or Doubted of the Literal Story, except when He makes them speak; nay the very thing which he has brought to prove them Unbelievers of the Letter shews the Direct contrary; for to make any Action a Mystical one, you must necessarily allow it to be a Literal one too; it may as well be said that there are Properties without a Substance, as that there can be a Figure without the Letter, except in Parables. I shall therefore pass by all his Scraps of the Fathers, for every Single one of which an Hundred might be found in the same Author, that expressly contradict what he is labouring to prove. He knows it very well, and therefore has all along made use of the Unfair and Dishonest Arts of Misrepresenting, and Curtailing the passages of the Fathers; sometimes leaving out in a Sentence what speaks against him, and sometimes bringing Sentences together which have no Relation to one another. Some Instances I have given already, and shall here present the Reader with One more. At the bottom of p. 26. he quotes St. *Jerome* thus, *Juxta simplicem Intelligentiam*—— *quod penitus absurdum*, &c. and explains them above by making That Father say, *there are Absurdities in the Letter*. But let St. *Jerome's* words be fairly produced, and they will run thus,

thus, (a) *According to the Literal Sense the Doves were not in the Seats (Chairs) but in Coops; unless perhaps the Sellers of the Doves sat in Chairs, which is wholly absurd to say, for Chairs are Marks of Honour to distinguish Masters and Teachers.* This Father, as many Others did, quibbled (poorly enough) upon the word *Cathedra*, by which is meant in the Gospels the *Seats* of them that sold Doves, but which He applyed to the *Chairs*, that the Teachers of the Christian Church then us'd, as We do our Pulpits: and the *Absurdity* which St. Jerome finds, is in the supposing that the Sellers of Doves sat in such *Cathedra*, as the Teachers of his days made use of. He does not say a word of any *Absurdity* in the Letter, or Literal Account of Jesus's Action; tho' by dropping the Greatest and most Material part of the Sentence Mr. W. has contriv'd to make the words *which is wholly absurd* to seem understood of the *Literal Sense*. If such Authors as This did not seek for Truth, if they sought only to establish Falsehood, yet methinks they should avoid a Fraud so easily detected, and should be Honefter than This comes to, out of very Knavery.

But before he leaves this Head, he attempts to play the Critick on the Sense of the words in which the Evangelists relate this Action of Jesus: and here he seems to improve in his happy Art of making the Authors he quotes bear *False witness*, for tho' he Mistakes as usual, he Falsifys rather more.

Instead of *them that sold and bought* (says he, p. 30.) it should be rendred *them that sold and preached*; for the word ἀγοράζειν does more properly signify to preach than to buy. It is so far from signifying this more properly, that it does not either in the New Testament, or (I believe) in any other Author, signify so at all. The word is used above thirty times in the New Testament,

(a) *Juxta simplicem Intelligentiam Columbe non erant in Cathedris, sed in Caveis; nisi forte Columbarum institores sedebant in Cathedris, quod penitus absurdum est, quia in Cathedris Magistrorum magis Dignitas indicatur.* Hieron. in Matt. xxi.

and let him shew where it can once be understood of preaching: When it is said *Luke xvii. 28.* of that wicked Generation, who would not hearken to *Noah the Preacher of Righteousness*, and upon whom therefore the Flood came, *They did eat, they drank, they sold, they ἡγοράζον*: are we to suppose that they were preaching? or when the *Wise Virgins* said to the *Foolish ones*, *Matth. xxv. 9.* Go ye to them that sell, and ἀγορεύσατε ἑαυτοῖς, can we think their Advice to have been, that they should preach to themselves? — Is this Criticism?

But then he has found a new Sense for Κολλυβισαί, or Money-Changers; the Greek word (says he, p. 31.) imports those who have a Knack to barter away a little Base and Brass Money with the Effigies of an Ox or Bull on it, in exchange for good Coin. And for this Sense of the word he quotes *Suicerus's Thesaurus in voce Κολλυβιστής*. 'Tis so common a Book, that Mr. W. might have expected to be found out in any False Quotation from thence: *Suicerus* quotes *Theophylact* to shew that the *Collybus* was a small piece of Brass Money, of little value, with the Effigies of an Ox, βῆς, on it; (not of a Bull; that's an Insertion of Mr. W. for the sake of a Jest); and he gives us this for his Own Opinion, that (a) the Κολλυβισαί or Money-Changers were such as sold, or gave, by way of Exchange, small pieces of Brass for other Money, I suppose, for Gold and Silver Pieces. But is this the same with giving Base (or Bad) Money for Good? Are not Twelve Pence in Copper as Good Money as a Shilling in Silver? Does the Baseness of the Metal, or Smallness of the Piece alter the Matter, when it is made up in Quantity? I am sure that This Author is a thorough *Collybist* in his own Sense of the word, and puts off very Base Quotations for Good ones.

Once more, and I have done with Mr. W. on this Head: To make all this the more applicable to the *Hireling Clergy* of This Age, for whose sake he has brought in his *Preaching* and his *Bulls*, he says, p. 31. *If τερα-*

(a) Rectè Κολλυβισαί definiuntur οἱ τὰ λεπτὰ νομίσματα πωλόντες, qui vendunt Minuta ara pro aliâ pecuniâ, scilicet accepto Collybo.

πέζας which is translated Tables does properly signify Pulpits who can help it? For this he refers us to Scapula's Quotation from Aristophanes? Scapula's words are these, (a) Aristophanes uses this word to signify a Pulpitum, or place rais'd higher than ordinary, on which the Slaves that were to be sold were expos'd to view. Mr. W. you see stop'd half way in the Quotation, that he might deceive the Reader into an Opinion that *Pulpitum* signifies there a *Pulpit*; but, when the whole Sentence is produced, it appears to signify something as different from it, as Dishonesty is from Good Policy.

II. The Second Miracle of *Jesus*, to which Mr. W. has made Objections, is that of his *permitting the Devils to enter into the Herd of Swine, which thereupon ran down a Precipice, and were all choak'd in the Sea*, p. 32.

And here I must remind the Reader, that in Facts done so Long since, and reported in so Brief a manner, it must often happen, that there can't possibly be any certain account given of Some Particulars; and Then, where a Probable one is offer'd, consistent with the Circumstances of the Story and with what other Historians relate, This is All that can be expected in the matter. In this Miracle before us, I promise that no Answer shall be given, which does not seem much more Reasonable than any Objection on the other side, even supposing it not to have been prov'd already that *Jesus rose from the Dead*; tho' I hope it will be remembered here, that if (as I shew'd Part I.) *Jesus* did really Rise again, it follows that he came from God, and that the Miracles which he is said to have wrought in his Life-time were Real ones; and This here being reckon'd by the Evangelists as One of the Number, with all Fair and Reasonable Men, their Inclination to Believe Every part of the Literal account of it, should at least be Stronger than to Disbelieve Any.

(a) Apud Aristophanem sic vocatur Pulpitum aut locus editor, in quo Verna & Mancipia omnium oculis venum exponebantur. Scapula in voce πέζας.

The Objections which Mr. *W.* has rais'd against the Literal Story of This Miracle are these Four.

How came those Madmen to have their Dwelling in the Tombs of a Burying-Ground? p. 32.

Where was the Humanity of the *Gadarenes* that did not take care of them, in Pity to Them as well as for the Safety of others? p. 32.

How came there to be any Herd of Swine in that Country, when the *Jews* were forbidden to eat Swine's Flesh? p. 33. Or

If the Swine belong'd to Gentile *Gadarenes*, with whom it was Lawful to keep and eat them, where was the Goodness and Justice of *Jesus's* permitting the Devils to enter into a Herd of them to their Destruction? p. 34.

These are his four Objections against this Miracle, and I shall take them in their Order.

1. §. *How came those Madmen to have their Dwelling in the Tombs of a Burying-Ground?* The true Language of which Question is this, Can you give a Reason for the Actions of *Madmen*? They were *Madmen*, and Therefore they stroll'd thither. But this Objection looks a little like a Reasonable One, because Mr. *W.* has added the words of *a Burying-Ground*; by which, if his Reader understands something resembling our Church-yards in Cities and Towns, and adjoining to the Church, he is Deceived; for as it is said that those *Madmen* were among the Tombs, so it is said that they were in the Mountains, and in the Wilderness or desert places. To understand which you must observe, that the *Jewish* Tombs were usually little Cells cut in the Sides of Caverns and the Hollow parts of Rocks and Mountains, at some distance from the Towns, and in lonely desert places. The Sepulchre that *Jesus* himself was laid in, was hewn out of a Rock in Mount Calvary; and many such Tombs remain even to this Day, as *Maundrel* and other Travellers thro' *Judæa* have assur'd us. And these Caves often serv'd for a Retreat and Shelter, for in such as these the Kings of *Canaan* hid them.

themselves from *Joshua*, *David* from *Saul*, and *Josephus* the *Jewish* Historian from the *Romans* that pursued him: Nay he makes very frequent mention in his History, of whole Bands of Thieves and Robbers lurking for Months together in such hollow Rocks, and making Excursions from thence: and he tells us particularly that there were (a) *Dens* or Caves of this sort on that part of the Coast of the Lake *Gennesareth*, which was in the lower *Galilee*, and therefore lay contiguous to *Gadara*.

And these Mountains as they afforded Shelter, so they might have supply'd the *Madmen* with Food; for in those Warm and Fruitful Climates They were not so Barren as we see them in Ours: *John the Baptist* (we read) liv'd in the Wilderness on *Locusts* and *Wild Honey*; and *Josephus* in his own Life tells us, that, when young, he went out into the Wilderness to be instructed by one *Banus*, (b) *who lived there upon what grew wild and without Culture*.

So that I have found Victuals and Habitation for the *Madmen*; and when it is prov'd that Others did, and They might have dwelt in the Mountains and among the Tombs, I hope the Assertion of three Evangelists that *Jesus* found them there, will overbear a meer Question unsupported with any attempt towards a Proof of the Contrary.

2. §. Mr. *W.*'s next Objection is, *Where was the Humanity of the Gadarenes that did not take Care of them, in pity to Them as well as for the Safety of Others?* Can any thing be more Perverse than this Question is? when *St. Mark* expressly tells us, chap. v. 4. that Care had been taken of them, that they had been bound in *Fetters and Chains*, and that this had been often done to them, but that they had pluck'd them asunder and broken them to pieces. The *Fetters and Chains* (whatever they were) were not strong enough for Men in their Out-

(a) Πεὺς δὲ τέτοις τὰ περὶ Γεννησάρ λίμνην σπηλαία καὶ ἄ κατω καλυμένην Γαλιλαίαν ἀνεταχίσατο. *Joseph. de Bell. Jud. L. 2. c. 20.*

(b) Τεφὴν τὴν αὐτομάτως φρεμένην περσεσμένον.

rageous Condition ; and therefore they gat loose from their Keepers, and retreated to the *Tombs and Mountains* ; where, when pursu'd, they probably hid themselves, and eluded all the Diligence and Humanity of the People who try'd to catch and bind them again.

But if This does not prove a Want of Humanity in the *Gadarenes*, he has another Proof, which he is sure is a Good one, *viz.* that they did *not dispatch them rather than their Neighbours and Passengers should be in danger from them*, p. 33. They are equally Inhumane in his Opinion (I find) for not taking Care to Preserve them, and for not taking Care to Destroy them : But I should have thought this an Argument for their Having Humanity, not for their Wanting it : for while the *Madmen* were alive, there were Hopes of laying hold on them once more, and perhaps of recovering them to their Senses. If Mr. *W.* had met with this Passage in some People's Writings, he would have rais'd a heavy Outcry against the Barbarity of the Doctrine of knocking a Madman on the head, only for fear he should do Mischief : and I would advise him, not to encourage this piece of Casuistry among Us. But after all, if the *Gadarenes* could not catch these *Madmen* to Bind them, how does he know that they could come up near enough to *dispatch* them ? They might (in his notion of Humanity) have a very Good Will to it, and yet not be able to do the Good Deed ; for *Josephus* will tell him what Difficulty *Herod*, with an Army, found to destroy a Sett of Robbers, that had lodged themselves in such Caves of the Mountains.

And, to say no more on this Head, if the *Gadarenes* wanted This or any other Instance of Humanity, what is that to the Story ? let Them look to their Behaviour : the Truth of this Fact is not affected by it ; unless it can be prov'd Impossible that in any Country a Madman should be found Unconfin'd, that is often attempting to do Mischief.

3. §. I proceed then to the third Objection, *How came there to be any Herd of Swine in that Country, when the*

the Jews were forbidden to eat Swine's Flesh? Suppose we could not give any Account of this matter, yet is a Story, so well attested (as I have shew'd all *Jesus's* Miracles to be), is such a Story to be Disbeliev'd, when there is no Proof against it? I call it *no Proof*, because to say a thing was *forbidden* and therefore it was *not* done, is to suppose that Laws are never broken, the contrary of which is seen every day, and was never more so than in Mr. *W.*'s own *Discourse*.

But I'll give him a very Fair and Probable account of this Circumstance. *Gadara* was a City on the other side of *Jordan*, near the *Lake of Gennesareth*; it was one of those Cities called *Decapolis*, and was situate in that Allotment which was made to the Tribe of *Manassèh*: *Pompey* indeed joyn'd it to the Province of *Syria*, *Augustus* afterwards gave it to *Herod*, and upon his Death annexed it again to *Syria*, as *Josephus* informs us: by this means it was inhabited partly by *Jews*, and partly by *Syrians* who were Heathens; *Josephus* (a) speaks frequently of both, as very Numerous there. But tho' its Inhabitants were thus of a mix'd sort, it was always reckon'd by the *Jews* as Part of their Dominions, and as such it felt the fury of *Vespasian* in the beginning of the *Jewish War* (b).

This being the State of the Town, and it being well known that the Heathens used *Swine* not only for Food but for Sacrifices too, why mayn't we suppose that the *Jews* of that Country might feed *Swine*, for the Profit they made by selling them to their Heathen Neighbours? (No, says Mr. *W.* from *Spencer de Leg. Hebr.*) *the Jews were forbidden, under the Pain of an Anathema, the keeping of any Swine in their Country*, p. 33. It is true, that there was such a (c) Law made in the time of *Hyrchanus*; but why was it made? because the *Jews* did use to keep *Swine*. And is it any argument to say, that, because a Law is made against any

(a) De Bell. Jud. l. 4. c. 7. Ed. Hudf. & l. 3. c. 7. & l. 2. c. 13.

(b) Joseph. Antiq. l. 14. c. 5. & de Bello Jud. l. 1. c. 8. & l. 4. c. 7.

(c) Casaubon advers. Earon. Exercit. 13. Art. 31. n. 69.

thing, Therefore it was not practis'd after? It *ought* not, I grant, but it does not follow that it *was* not. Have We not Laws, many and strong, against running of Brandy, Tea, &c. and would you argue from thence that no Brandy or Tea is run upon our Coasts? if we could make this out clearly, we might save the Government the Expence of many Customhouse Officers.

If the *Jews* did once practise this feeding of Swine (as the Law made against it sufficiently shews), I don't see but it may be reasonably suppos'd that they might Continue to do so even After the Law was made: It is well known that there is too much of forbidden Trade among Us, tho' we have more Laws than One against it, and many methods to put them in Execution: and it is much more likely that this feeding of Swine might be practis'd about *Gadara*, because it was not only upon the Extremity of the *Jewish* Dominions, but was then under (a) Heathenish Jurisdiction, so that the Force of the Law rested upon the Consciences only of the *Jewish Gadarenes*.

I have suppos'd with Mr. *W.* that the *Swine* belonged to *Jewish* Owners, which I have as much right to do as any one can have to suppose the contrary: and it seems Probable that even those *Madmen* were *Jews*; for we don't find *Jesus* in all his Travels conversing with and healing any but those to whom he was sent, *the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*, unless in one case particularly taken notice of by the Evangelists. Upon this supposition, I have shewn it probable, that the *Gadarene* Jews might keep Swine for the Use of their Gentile Neighbours, tho' it was forbidden by Law, and even under the Pain of an *Anathema*.

4. §. I come to Mr. *W.*'s last Objection, *where was the Goodness and Justice of Jesus's permitting the Devils to enter into the Herd of Swine to their Destruction?*

(a) Joseph. de-Bell. Jud. l. 1. c. 20. Ed Hudson.

There was no want of *Goodness* or *Justice* in *Jesus*, even if they had belonged to *Gentiles*, who might eat them; for the part, which *Jesus* had in their Destruction, does not appear to be such as made him either Principal or Accessary: it is said indeed by St. *Mark* that he gave them leave, but by St. *Luke* only that he suffer'd the Devils to enter into them. By which may be meant no more, than that He did not Prevent them, that he did not Interpose his Divine Power, by which he might have hindred them from entring: for this Explanation may be justify'd by other Passages of the *Old* and *New Testament*, as (a) *Grotius* has fully shewn. And if this made *Jesus* a Sharer in their Destruction, it may as well be said, that God is answerable for all the Evil done in the World, nay he will come in for a share in This very Destruction of the Swine, for He too permitted it; and therefore by this Argument I don't see but His *Goodness* and *Justice* will be impeached upon this occasion.

But if the *Jews* of *Gadara* were the Owners of these Swine, as I have suppos'd, then there was no Injustice in *Jesus*, even allowing that he was Accessary to the Destruction of them, and gave the Devils such a Leave, as assisted them to do what they did: For then the Owners of them kept them against the Law made in *Hyrchanus's* time to prevent it: We find in *Josephus* an Edict of the Emperor *Augustus* requiring the *Roman* Governours, in every Country where the *Jews* resided, to suffer them (b) to live according to such of their own Country Laws, as were in force in *Hyrchanus's* time: from This one may gather, that all Laws made in *Hyrca-*

(a) Vide loca Gen. 20. 6. & 31. 7. Exod. 3. 19. & 12. 23. Psalm. 16. 10. Act. 2. 27. Ejicere Diabolum ex homine, Christi fuit Actio; in Porcos ut irent, nullâ actione Christi erat opus: hoc enim optabant ipsi Diaboli, & viribus nativis id ipsum efficere poterant, dum ne vi majore impedirentur: Non ergo Christus in hac re vim agentem exseruit, sed vim impedire valentem sustinuit. *Grotius* in Matth. 8. 31.

(b) Τῶν Ἰουδαίων Χριστῶν τοῖς ἰδίοις δεσμοῖς κατὰ τὴν πάτριον αὐτῶν νόμον, καθὼς ἐχρῶτο ἐπὶ Τριανῶ ἀρχιερέως Θερῶ ὑφίστα. *Antiq. Jud.* 1. 16. c. 6.

nus's Time were look'd on by the *Jews* as binding them; otherwise when they solicited that Emperor for this Edict in their favour, they wou'd scarcely have fix'd on this Time for their Standard: so that by their own acknowledg'd Constitution the keeping of Swine was a Crime, and therefore the *Jewish* Keepers of them were justly Punishable for it. And it is well known that Prophets or Persons acting by the Spirit of God did frequently among the *Jews* put the Laws in Execution against Offenders, without calling in the Assistance of the Magistrate: nay, it was a receiv'd Maxim among the *Jews*, that such Persons had a Right to act thus, and to do much more than This, even to dispense with some of *Moses's* Laws, as might be easily shewn: What *Phineas* did to *Zimri*, and what *Elijah* did to the Priests of *Baal*, were look'd upon by the *Jews* as Precedents in this Case; and therefore We Christians, who acknowledge *Jesus* to have been more than a Prophet, can never be at a loss to account for his exercising an Authority among the *Jews*, which they allow'd every Ordinary Prophet to have.

I have now given an Answer to Mr. *W.*'s several Objections against this Miracle: and I hope that it appears to the Reader how Frivolous and Trifling they are. If we had had no Lights from History to help us out, yet a Christian might easily maintain his ground against meer Questions, which are not supported by any Proofs, and which might be effectually answer'd upon several Probable suppositions. But the Authors which I have quoted speak home to the purpose, and both *Josephus* and the other *Jewish* Writers, whom I have made the most use of, can never be suspected of any Partiality in favour of the Cause I am maintaining; so that their Testimony, where it helps us, comes with the more Weight, and should put all Cavils under a perpetual silence.

Here, as in the former case, Mr. *W.* would have us believe, that the Fathers look'd upon this Miracle as only a *Parabolical Narrative*: and he tells us, that upon
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the Encouragement of Origen and others we ought to expose the Absurdities of the Letter. 'Till He can better shew the Absurdities of it, than he has done, all the Encouragement which Origen and the other Fathers give him, is to no purpose.

But where does *Origen* Encourage him to this? Why, he says, p. 35. that *Origen's Commentaries on this part of St. Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospel are lost, otherwise unquestionably he would have told us that he did not believe any thing of the Letter of this Story.*

It would be strange indeed if Mr. *W.* should know what *Origen's* Opinion was in his Writings that are Lost, when he always mistakes it in his Writings that are Extant: But I can more unquestionably assure him, that, if those *Commentaries* had been preserved, *Origen* would have declar'd his belief of the Literal account of this Story, because he *has* done it in some of his *Commentaries* which are remaining; for in those upon *St. John's Gospel*, incidentally mentioning the Country of the Gergesenes, where *St. Matth.* lays the Scene of this Miracle (and which is thought to include *Gadara* in it) he says that (a) *Gergesa was an ancient City, near what is now called the Lake of Tiberias, in the Neighbourhood of which there is a Precipice adjoyning to the Lake, which is shew'd as the Steep place from whence the Swine were thrown down by the Devils that enter'd them.* Does not *Origen* here expressly declare his Belief of the Letter of the Story, when he points out the very place, where he supposes it to have happen'd?

Let this then suffice for a Specimen of Mr. *W.'s* Acquaintance with the Fathers, or of his Sincerity in reporting their Opinions: I shall examine no more of his Quotations on this head, and indeed I might well dismiss the Subject, having given (I think) a suf-

(a) Γέργεσα, ἀπ' ἧς οἱ Γεργεσῖται, πόλις ἀρχαία περὶ τὴν νῦν κα-
λαμένην Τιβεριάδα λίμνην, περὶ ἣν κρημνὸς παρῳκόμενος τῇ λίμνῃ,
ἀπ' οὗ δύνανται τὰς χοῖρας ὑπὸ τῶν δαιμόνων καταβελῆσθαι. Vol.
2. p. 131. Edit. Huet.

ficient Reply to all the Exceptions he has made to this Miracle.

But it may not be amiss (before I conclude) to add some farther Remarks upon this Story, because there are Some (whose Opinion is of more Weight than Mr. *W's*) who seem to think the Circumstance of Men's being *possessed by Devils or Unclean Spirits* in our Saviour's days to be a great Difficulty, and therefore they suspect that nothing more than Madness is meant by such a Possession; and for this Notion of theirs they quote what the *Jews* said of *Jesus*, John x. 20. *He hath a Devil, and is Mad*, supposing that a *Mad-man* was in the *Jewish* way of speaking called *one possess'd with a Devil or Unclean Spirit*. But the Truth is, that the *Jews* reckon'd this One sort of Madness, and the Worst sort; but they distinguish'd between This and what we properly call Madness arising from some Distemper of the Body: So that tho' they called all Persons possess'd with the Devil by the name of Madmen, yet they did not give to all Madmen the name of Persons thus possess'd: And they distinguish'd very rightly in the Case; for in the Instance of this Miracle before us, we find that the Devils Spake out of the possess'd Persons, they were Sent out of them, and they Enter'd into the Herd of Swine: Personal Actions as well as Speeches are ascrib'd to them, which can never be ascrib'd to meer Phrensy and Madness; for had there been nothing more than Madness, then when it ceas'd in the Men, it would have had no Influence on the *Swine*; whereas that which went out of the One and enter'd into the Other, must have had a Distinct Being and Existence of its Own. This therefore is the true Gospel Notion of *Demoniacks*, they were not *Madmen* only, but they were possess'd by *Unclean Spirits*; and if *Jesus* be prov'd to have come from God, he could not have been unacquainted with the Immaterial World, and therefore no one can reasonably refuse to believe the Account, which he has given us, of the Operations of Evil *Spirits* upon Human

man Bodies. Had no Authors, but the Sacred ones, made mention of the *Demoniacks* of those days, yet the Scripture Testimony would have been sufficient : But there are Unquestionable Authors which agree in this Story, and speak of Possess'd Persons as no uncommon Sight in their Days : *Josephus* (a) says that *Solomon* had from God the Art of casting Devils out of Men and healing them ; and that he compos'd Charms for asswaging the Disease, and left behind him Forms of Adjuration, by which the Devils were so effectually cast out as never to return again ; and he adds, that this way of healing was practis'd among his Countrymen even down to his own days. Whether the Jews had so effectual a method of dispossessing Men as *Josephus* thought, yet thus much appears plainly from his Testimony, that there were Persons possess'd with Devils in his days, and long before ; nay he tells us in the same place that he saw one dispossess'd in the presence of the Emperor *Vespasian* and his Family : and to prevent our mistaking this Calamity for Madness, or any other Common and Natural Distemper, he explains what he means by being possess'd with Devils, when he (b) says that what were call'd so, were the Spirits of Wicked Men, which enter'd into living Persons, and occasion'd the Death of such of them as met with no Help. *Plutarch* and *Lucian* mention *Demoniacks* as well known in their days, and *Philostratus* in his Life of *Apollonius* among the Miraculous Cures which he ascribes to him, has a particular account of a Young Man who had an Unclean Spirit, (c) which

(a) *Antiq. Jud. L. 8. c. 2.* Παρέχε αὐτῷ μαθῆν ὁ Θεὸς καὶ τὴν κατὰ τῶν Δαιμόνων τέχνην εἰς ὥσπερ καὶ θεραπεῖαν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· ἐπωδὸς τε συναξάμεν· αἷς παρηγορεῖται τὰ νοσήματα, καὶ τρόπος ἐξορκώσεων κατέλιπεν, αἷς ἐνδύμενα τὰ δαιμόνια ὥς μικρὸν ἐπαυελθῆν ἐκδιώκον· καὶ αὐτὴ μέχρι νῦν παρ' ἡμῖν θεραπεῖα πλεῖστον ἰσχύει.

(b) Ταῦτα καλέμενα Δαιμόνια (ταῦτα δὲ πονηρῶν ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπων πνέματα) τοῖς ζῶσιν ἐσθλύνοντα καὶ κτείνοντα τὴν βοηθείαν μὴ τυγχάνοντες. *De Bell. Jud. L. 7. c. 6.*

(c) Οὐ συσχωρεῖ αὐτὸν οἶκοι εἶναι — εἰς τὰ ἔρημα τῶν χειρῶν ἐκίρπει — ἀπειλεῖ κρημνὸς καὶ βάραθρον,

made him wander from home, and led him into the Desolate parts of the Country, amidst deep Vallies and Precipices. Where the Reader may observe that the same Circumstances are said to have attended this Young man, as the *Madmen* in the Gospels: And whatever was the Truth of the Fact reported by *Philosstratus*, yet it shews both his Opinion that there were *Demoniacks* at that time, and that the Effects of such Possession were commonly the same as the Evangelists represent them. I don't pretend to be able to assign the Reason why God permitted such Instances to be so Frequent in those Ages; but our Ignorance of the Reason is no Argument against the Fact, which we see is confirm'd, not by Christian Writers only, but by the Unsuspected Testimonies of Jewish and Heathenish Authors: Except we knew all the Ends and Designs of Providence, we can never set up for Judges whether the Means it makes use of are Wise or not: how often do we find our selves mistaking the Wisdom of even our Neighbour's Actions, for want of knowing what he has in view, and what the Circumstances of his Affairs consider'd all together require? And shall We object against things, which we read in the Sacred Writings, as Absurd and Unreasonable, when we Certainly are less able to fathom the Vast and Comprehensive Designs of Providence, than we are to pry into our Neighbour's Little, Narrow ones? A thousand things may be True, which we can give no Account of, because we are but Men; if therefore any one should ask me, why the Devils, which *Jesus* sent out of these *Madmen*, desir'd leave to enter into Cattle to their Destruction, I should perhaps answer, that *Jesus*, who best knew the Nature of such Evil Spirits, has all along represented them to us as delighting in Mischief; and therefore it seems natural enough, that Beings of such a Disposition not expecting that *Jesus* would permit them to enter into Human Bodies for the very same reason that he was then forcing them out, should desire to mischief Man as much as they could in
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what is always very dear to him, I mean his Property : And if it should be asked again, why they desir'd to enter into a Herd of Swine rather than into any other Herd, I might answer that possibly no other Herd was there, or they might reasonably have thought that *Jesus* was not so likely to interpose in This Case as in any other, because the Owners of the *Swine* were justly Punishable with their Destruction. These Answers I might perhaps give to such Enquirers; but I should think that these Answers (like their Questions) were more Curious than Necessary, and should not think my self bound to prove more than that they are Probable: for to all Reasonable Men it is sufficient to shew (as I have done already) that *Jesus* having wrought the greatest of Miracles in raising himself from the Dead, there can be no foundation for doubting of the Truth of this Miracle wrought on the *Madmen*, even tho' there were less of Light to be drawn from Reason and History for clearing up the several Circumstances of it.

To conclude; having examin'd carefully all the Objections which Mr. *W.* has rais'd against these two Actions of our Saviour, I may venture to say that the Reader must by this time be satisfi'd of the Weakness and Unfairness of that Author's attempts. Perhaps I may shew more of them in another Discourse of this nature: In the mean while I hope that it will ever be remembred against such Unbelievers, that Things may seem Difficult to them, only because they are Ignorant; and that there is a Wide Difference between a Passage's not being to be Understood, and Their not Understanding it.

F I N I S.



THE
M I R A C L E S
O F
J E S U S
V I N D I C A T E D.

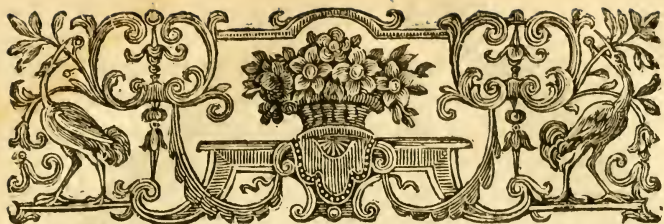
P A R T III.

CONTAINING
A Defence of the Literal Story of *JESUS's*
causing the *BARREN FIG-TREE*
to Wither away,

AND
His turning the *WATER* into *WINE*.

L O N D O N:

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THE
MIRACLES of JESUS
VINDICATED.

PART III.

IT is a True and a well known Observation of the Lord Bacon, that *a little Philosophy inclines Men's Minds to Atheism, but that Depth in Philosophy brings them about to Religion again*: and it may as justly be said that a slender Acquaintance with the Scripture furnishes Men with Doubts and Objections, which a thorough Knowledge of it would soon ease them from. A greater Instance of this can scarcely be given than in the six *Discourses* not long since published upon our Saviour's *Miracles*, in which every Intelligent Reader must be at a loss whether he should most admire the Boldness or the Ignorance of the Author; for thro' the Whole there appears such an Unacquaintedness with the Jewish History, Customs, and Forms of speaking, as shews that there are *Arts* which Mr. W. is not enough *Master of*; and

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such

such a want of Sincerity in his Quotations and Applications of them, as shews that there is an *Art* which he is too much *Master of*.

In opposition to what he has so boldly advanced in those *Discourses*, my first Part began (where every Rational Apology for the Truth of the Christian Revelation should begin) with shewing by Direct Proof that *Jesus* did truly Raise himself from the Dead, as he had foretold; that the profess'd *Witnesses* of his Resurrection could not possibly be Deceiv'd in this Matter, the Evidence which they had for it being such as excluded all Mistake, upon any Supposition whatever; and that there is as strong Proof of their not intending to Deceive us by a False Testimony, as any Fact is capable of receiving, nay more than any other Fact in the world ever did receive.

And this sure Foundation being laid, the Consequence, which was then drawn from it, seems Clear and Undeniable, *viz.* that if *Jesus* wrought this One Miracle, which must be allowed to have been the greatest that could be wrought, it is Unreasonable, it is Perverse, not to allow the Reality of the Other Miracles which the Evangelists ascribe to him: And therefore all Objections raised against the Literal Story of them, (if they could be answered no other way) yet might receive a Satisfactory Answer by saying, that the Miracle being a True one, it is highly Improbable that any of the Circumstances, with which the Story of it is told, were otherwise. Things may seem strange and difficult to Us at such a distance of time, and this is easily accounted for; but there is no account to be given, why the Evangelists should, in relating a Real Miracle, add such False Circumstances to it, as would help to destroy its Credit. So that the Question comes to this, whether an Apostle or Mr. *W.* is to be Believed; an Apostle
who

who was Eye-witness to the Fact, or Mr. *W.* who was no Witness, and whom in several Instances I have proved to be a False Witness.

With this Evidence then in hand I enter'd (in my second Part) upon a particular Examination of the two first Actions of *Jesus*, which Mr. *W.* had objected to, and endeavoured to clear the Literal Story of them from all the Difficulties which he had loaded them with: and in the course of this Enquiry I now and then set before him some Instances of the Dishonesty of his Quotations from the Fathers and others, that he might at least see that he was discover'd, and never expect that his bare Word should pass for Current in any Argument hereafter.

My present Design is to do the same by two more of the Miracles, which he has endeavoured to expose; but as I am not bound to follow the Order in which he has plac'd the Miracles, (a Thing of no weight either to his Cause or Mine), I have singled out those which he professes to have treated the most *Ludicrously*, and which I thought to want the most help towards vindicating the Literal account of them. I shall therefore without further Preface enter upon

III. The Story of (a) *Jesus's cursing the Fig-tree*, not despairing to convince even Him that it was neither an *Absurd, Foolish, and Ridiculous*, nor a *Malicious and Ill-natur'd Act*, as he has been pleas'd in his mannerly way to call it.

The Reader may not be at leisure enough to approve of a Solemn Answer to every Trifle; and therefore I shall confine my self to such Objections made by Mr. *W.* against the Literal account of this Miracle, as are of most Weight, and may seem to deserve some Consideration; and they are these Three.

How

(a) Mr. *W's* Discourse 3d. p. 4.

How could *Jesus* expect to find Fruit upon this Fig-tree, when *the time of Figs was not yet*? p. 6.

What Legal Right had he to the Fruit, if he had found any on the Tree? p. 8. and

What Right had he to smite the Tree with a Curse, when it was none of his Property? p. 8.

I. §. The first of these Questions has indeed something Material in it, because as *St. Mark*, xi. 13. reports this Fact in our Translation, there is more room for Cavil than in any other Instance which *Mr. W.* has singled out to quarrel with: *St. Mark's* words are these, *And seeing a Fig-tree afar off having Leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon; and when he came to it, he found nothing but Leaves, for the time of Figs was not yet.*

At first sight any Candid Reader would imagine that the Passage was some how misunderstood, and that the Evangelist who writes so good sense in the other parts of his Gospel, would not have writ downright Nonsense in This.

And therefore I shall endeavour to clear up this matter; for the doing of which I shall shew two things, *viz.* that at the time when *Jesus* went up to this Fig-tree, it was a Season to expect to find ripe Figs in *Judea*; and secondly, that the words of *St. Mark* may be understood so as to be consistent with this Circumstance.

Whoever reads the Gospels carefully will be convinc'd that the day, on which *Jesus* wrought this Miracle on the Fig-tree, was about the 11th of the Jewish Month *Nisan*, or *Tuesday* before the *Passover*; *Mr. W.* indeed says † that *there are no Grounds from the Text to think so*; but there are Grounds from that Text compar'd with others,

† Page 29.

and the Proof of it is so plain that none but such a sort of Freethinker as He could miss it. Now it is well known that the Passover was kept by the *Jews* on the fourteenth day of their first month *Nisan*, that is, about the latter end of our *March*.

The Point then to be enquired into, is, whether at that time (or three days before) there us'd to be any Figs in *Judæa* so Ripe as to be fit for eating; and that there did, may be shewn by the following Arguments.

(a) *Josephus* tells us, that at the end of the winter *Herod* besieged *Jerusalem*, and that after a siege of five Months it was taken in the third Month, *i. e.* the Month *Sivan*, which answers to the last half of our *May*, and the first half of our *June*. Count then five Months back from thence, and you will find that the Winter ended and the Spring began in *Judæa* about the middle of our *January*: Now *Solomon* in *Canticles* ch. ii. among other marks of the Winter's being past, and consequently of the Spring's beginning in that Country, describes This to be one, that *the Fig-tree putteth forth her green Figs, and the Vines with the tender Grape give a good Smell*, ver. 13. or more literally thus; *The Fig-tree hath begun to give a flavour (or sweet taste) to her Young Figs, and the Vines to give a good Smell to the Tender Grape*: For the Original word, which we translate *putteth forth*, signifies as I have (b) render'd it; and this Sense of the Word is more agreeable to what is there said of the *Vines*: And if in the middle of our *January*, the Figs

(a) Compare what he says *De Bell. Jud. Lib. 1. cap. 17, 18.* with what he says *Antiq. Jud. Lib. 14. c. 16.* Edit. *Hudson*.

(b) *Kanat* every where else in the Old Testament signifies *conduit aromatibus*, or something resembling that Sense; and in this Place *Pagninus* renders it in the Margin by *dulcescere fecit*, and *Abenezra* by *dulcoravit*.

were so forward as Then to have a Flavour, *i. e.* to have begun to ripen, it is Unreasonable to think that in so Warm and Fruitful a Climate there might not be Ripe ones about the latter end of *March*, which was the time when our Saviour sought for them on this Fig-tree.

Again; we are told in *Numb. xiii.* that when *Moses* sent the Spies to search the Land of *Canaan*, *the time was the time of the First-ripe Grapes*, ver. 20. and that *they returned from searching the Land after forty days*, ver. 25. and that they brought with them from thence *Figs*, as well as *Clusters of Grapes full-grown*; as the Weight of them shew'd them to be, ver. 23. Now the *LXX* Version says that (a) *the time was the time of Spring*; and of the same Opinion was *Philo* in his *Life of Moses*, for he introduces him as telling the Spies, when he sent them, that (b) *the Season was then the Fittest for discovering the Goodness of the Country, because it was Spring, and as charging them not to return till the Summer was come, that they might bring of the Fruits of the Land for a Sample.* Supposing then that it was towards the middle of the *Spring*, or about the middle of our *February*, when the Spies set out, and allowing that they were gone forty days (as the Text says), it will follow that they return'd a few days before the Passover; and if they brought Figs along with them as well as Ripe or full-grown Grapes, and if the one Fruit was as forward as the other (which the Song of *Solomon* before quoted plainly supposes), then there

(a) Αἱ ἡμέραι, ἡμέραι ἔαρος, πρόδρομοι σαφυλῆς. LXX. *Numb* xiii. 20.

(b) Ὁ δὲ καιρὸς, ἐν ᾧ μάλιστα χώρας ἀρετὴν δοκιμάζουσι συμβέβηκεν, ἔαρ ἐστίν, ὃ νῦν ἐφέστηκεν. — ἀμεινον δ' ἂν εἴη καὶ ἐπιμεῖναι μέχρι θέρους ἀκμαζούσης, καὶ διακονίσαι καρπὸς, ὁἷον αἰδείγματα χώρας εὐδαίμοιο. pag. 435. Edit. Turnebi.

were Ripe Figs in the Land of *Judæa* at that very time of the Year when *Jesus* fought for them upon this Fig-tree.

It is own'd that no direct mention is made of the *Spring* in the Hebrew Text; but *Philo* and those Translators of the Law, who were *Jews*, may well be suppos'd to have known that the Expression, *the time of the First-ripe Grapes*, was Equivalent to that of the *Spring*; and We, who are no *Jews*, may fairly suppose, that this search was made in the *Spring*, that the *Israelites* might have the Summer before them for their Invasion of the Land, which they intended to have immediately entered into, as appears from ch. xiv. 44. Thus much at least the Testimonies of the LXX and of *Philo* must be allow'd to prove, that they took it for granted that there were Figs ripe there by the time of the *Passover*, or else they would never have assign'd the *Spring* for the time of the Departure of the Spies, when they knew that at the end of forty days they brought back Ripe Figs along with them.

To what has been said may be added, that *Josephus* (a) describing the Fruitfulness of the Country of *Gennēsareth*, which was a Part of *Judæa*, says that it afforded Figs and Grapes ten Months in the Year without Intermision; and tho' some allowance is to be made for the Extraordinary Fertility of that Territory, yet the other Branches of the Country must be suppos'd to have afforded these Fruits a great part of the Year, especially that where this Fig-tree grew; it being between *Jerusalem* and *Bethany*, i. e. in the Lot of the Tribe of *Benjamin*, which (as the same *Josephus*

(a) Τὰ μὲν γε βασιλικώτατα, σαυλὴν τε καὶ σῦκον, δέκα μηνὶν ἀδιαλείπτως χορηγεῖ. De Bell. Jud. L. 3. c. 9. Ed. *Hudson*.

tells us) (*a*) was second to no part of Canaan in Fruitfulness.

Upon such Authorities as these, drawn from the Jewish Writers themselves, we know what to make of the *First-ripe Figs* so often mention'd by the Prophets of the Old Testament. For God says in *Hosea* ix. 10. *I saw your Fathers as the first-ripe in the Fig-tree at her time*; and these Early Figs seem to have been much esteem'd among the Jews, for *Jerem.* xxiv. 2. speaks of a Basket, that had very Good Figs, even like the Figs that are first ripe: And (to mention no other Passages) the Greediness, with which the Jews us'd to gather this Pleasant Fruit, is thus describ'd by *Isaiah* xxviii. 4. *As the hasty Fruit* (i. e. (*b*) the first-ripe Figs) *before the Summer, which when he that looketh upon it, seeth it, while it is yet in his hand, he eateth it up*, i. e. (as the (*c*) LXX explain it) he that seeth it, is ready to devour it before he gathers it, so very fond are men of this sort of Figs. And that we may not mistake the Season when these so-much-coveted Figs were pluck'd for eating, *Isaiah* here tells us that it was *before the Summer*, which (as appears by what I have quoted from *Philo*, p. 8.) began in *Judæa* about the time of the Passover; and therefore the proper time of a Traveller's looking for these *first ripe Figs*, was the time when our Saviour came up for that purpose to this Fig-tree.

The Case seems to have been This; either there were two different sorts of Fig-trees in *Judæa*, the one forwarder than the other; or (what I rather think) the same Fig-trees yielded Fruit there twice

(*a*) Antiqu. Jud. Lib. 5. c. 1. Ed. Hudson.

(*b*) LXX. ὡς πρόδρομος σύκε.

(*c*) LXX. Ὁ ἰδὼν αὐτὸ, πρὶν εἰς τὴν χεῖρα αὐτῆ λαβεῖν αὐτὸ, φελέσει αὐτὸ καταπιεῖν.

in each Year, once about the time of the Passover, and the second time much later.

That there was a particular sort of Fig-trees in *Judæa*, *Pliny* seems to say when he speaks of one that grew in *Syria* (under which name he often comprehends *Judæa*) and gives this account of it, that (a) *it had Leaves always on it*, and that *when the Fruit of the preceding year was gathered about the Dog-days, the new Fruit began immediately, and was growing all the winter long.*

But whether this Fig-tree was of that sort or not; yet *Pliny* says of Fig-trees in general, that *they (b) bear an early ripe fruit, i. e. the most Hearty and Vigorous of them produce young Figs in the end of Autumn* (as they do often among Us) which hang on the Trees all the Winter, and then ripen early in the Spring; *alieno præcoces anno*, as *Pliny* expresses it: These were called *Prodromi* at *Athens*, the name which the *LXX* often give to the *First ripe Figs*; and of this sort it is that he says, (c) *the Leaves of the Fig-trees come later than the Fruit.*

From all which I conclude, that there might have been Figs in *Judæa* so Ripe as to be fit for Eating at the time when *Jesus* went up to this Fig-tree; and that these Early Figs were of so Good a Kind, that Travellers among the *Jews* were commonly inclin'd to eat of them; and that *Jesus* seeing that this Fig-tree had Leaves, (which, as *Pliny* says, were later than the Fruit) had good

(a) *Similis his siliqua, quam* (Al. *Similis & quam*) *Iones Cerauniam vocant; trunco & ipsa fertilis, sed pomum siliqua: Ob id quidam Ægyptiam Ficum dixere, errore manifesto; non enim in Ægypto nascitur, sed in Syria — semper comantibus foliis — pomum antecedentis anni circa Canis ortus detracto statim alterum parit, per Arcturum hyeme sætus enutrient.* Nat. Hist. l. 13. c. 8.

(b) *Ficus & Præcoces habet, quos Athenis Prodromos vocant.* lib. 16. 26.

(c) *Exceptâ Fico, cui serius Folium nascitur quàm Pomum.* Lib. 16. 26.

reason to go up to it, expecting to find Fruit thereon.

What remains then to be prov'd is this, *viz.* that the words of St. *Mark*, ὃ γὰρ ἦν καὶ πρὸς συκῶν, may be so interpreted as to be consistent with what has been already prov'd.

And Mr. *W.* himself has furnish'd us with (a) an Interpretation of the words which will serve the purpose; for he has fallen in with some of the Modern Commentators, and has recommended the reading of St. *Mark's* words by way of Interrogation, *for was it not the time of Figs?* Admitting this small change, and putting a part of the Sentence into a Parenthesis, the whole Verse will run thus; *And seeing a Fig-tree afar off having Leaves, he came if haply he might find any thing thereon (and when he came to it, he found nothing but Leaves), for was it not the time of Figs?* By the help of the Parenthesis the last words are a good reason for what went immediately before the Parenthesis, *i. e.* for *Jesus's* expecting to find Fruit upon the Tree: And this way of writing might be shewn to be very common in all Authors, especially the Sacred ones.

Upon this Interpretation of the words Mr. *W.* says, *all the Difficulty vanishes*; but this he says, *after* he had made the most of this Difficulty, and expos'd St. *Mark's* account with all the Raillery and Ill-will that he could shew, for (b) a page or two together. Where then is the Candour, where the Honesty of such a Behaviour? What? ridicule the Evangelist as guilty of an Absurdity, and yet have a Solution of that Absurdity ready at hand? A plain Mark that it is not Truth which this Author aims at! but this is only one Mark out of a thousand.

(a) P. 28.

(b) P. 7, 8.

And yet I can help Mr. *W.* to some other Solutions of this Difficulty, where there is no Change of the Point, and which I prefer to His, as more Natural, and answering the purpose with the same effect: Suppose then that by the words, *for the time of Figs was not yet*, may be meant, that the time of gathering Figs was not yet come; and thus, keeping the Parenthesis, as before plac'd in the middle of the Sentence, we may understand the words as a reason given why *Jesus came if haply he might find any thing on the Fig-tree.* The Fig-harvest (if I may so call the Gathering-time) was not yet arrived: On the second day of Unleaven'd Bread, which was about five or six days after This, the First-Fruits of all, that was then Ripe, were solemnly offer'd in the Temple, and till Then the Owners of the Fig-trees were not allow'd to gather in their Fruit; so that till Then they were oblig'd to let their Figs (tho' Ripe) hang on the Trees, and consequently five or six days before the Passover (*i. e.* when *Jesus* went up to this Tree) any Traveller might expect to find Fruit upon the Early Fig-trees which he met with in his Journey.

That by the *time of Figs* may be here meant the time of gathering them, is no new Opinion of mine; It has been maintained by Dr. *Lucas*, and by the Excellent Bishop *Floyd*; and I find Dr. *Whitby* mentioning it as the Ingenious Exposition of a Reverend and Learned Bishop, whom he does not name; and tho' he does not agree with him, yet he declares that he should acquiesce in this Interpretation, if he could find it prov'd that any Figs were fit to be gathered in at the Passover. This (I think) I have prov'd with such a degree of Evidence as Dr. *Whitby* would have admitted. And for the *time of Figs* signifying the time of gathering them, there is good Authority from the Writings of the sacred Penmen. This seems to
be

be the Sense of the word *καιρός*, *time* or *season*, in *Psal.* i. 4. (according to the LXX.) (a) *which shall give its Fruit in its Season*, i. e. at the time of gathering it: And this (I think) certainly is the Sense of the word in *St. Mark* xii. 2. but particularly in *St. Matt.* xxi. 34. who says that when the Lord of the Vineyard in the Parable *sent his Servants to the Husbandmen, that they might receive the Fruits of it*, it was *when the time of the Fruit drew near*, ὅτε ἤγγισεν ὁ καιρός τῶν καρπῶν, i. e. when the time of gathering it was at hand; for, it being most natural to suppose that the Servants were not sent more early than there was need, the time of ripe Grapes was probably then actually come, and only the time of gathering them drew near.

But if this Solution should not please some Readers; if it should not be allowed me to give this Sense to *the time of Figs*, yet from what has been shewn on the former head, there may be drawn an Interpretation free from all Objection. For if there were two *times* or *Seasons* of ripe Figs in *Judæa*, the one much later than the other; and if the later Season was much more plentiful and common than the former (as is natural to suppose) then the later Season was properly *the time of Figs*, and of this it was truly said by the Evangelist, that then (at the Passover) *it was not yet come*. *Jesus* seeing a Fig-tree at a distance that had Leaves on it, and the Leaves coming later than the early Figs, he did not know but this Fig-tree might be one of those which bore early Ripe Figs, and might therefore have Fruit on it at that time: On this account *he came εἰ ἄρα εὐρήσει* if haply he might find any thing thereon; looking on the Circumstance of its having Leaves as a Likely Mark of its having Fruit, but not as a Sure one, because the Trees

(a) Ὁ ὃ καρπὸν αὐτοῦ δώσει ἐν καιρῷ αὐτοῦ.

which bore only the later Figs might have Leaves on them; and therefore he came up to the Fig-tree doubtful whether he should find any, for *the ordinary time of Figs was not yet come*; then a Man might have expected to find Figs on Every Tree, but now they were to be found only on Some, which were more strong and Vigorous than Ordinary; of this sort the Leaves seem'd to promise this Tree to be, and we may suppose that of this sort it was; so that in this way of interpreting St. Mark, the words *for the time of Figs was not yet*, are meant of the Common and Ordinary Season, and are assign'd as a reason why *Jesus* went up to the Fig-tree, *if haply he might find*, having only some Hope, but not trusting that he should find Fruit thereon.

But let Mr. *W.* choose which Solution he will, (his Own, if he pleases) and he must acknowledge that there is a sufficient answer given to the suppos'd *Unreasonableness of Jesus's expecting to find Fruit out of Season.*

Having dwelt pretty long on this head, because it contain'd the most material part of his Discourse, I shall now proceed briefly to the second Objection.

2. §. What Legal Right *Jesus* had to the Fruit, if he had found any on the Tree?

To which I answer, that he had a Right, and a Legal one too, tho' he *was neither Landlord nor Tenant*, (as Mr. *W.* expresses it) nor *had any House or Land of his own by Law.* And what I say, will be prov'd thus. There is a Law given by God to the *Jews* in Deut. xxiii. 24, 25 to this purpose, *When thou comest into thy Neighbour's Vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes to thy fill, at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy Vessel: And when thou comest into the standing Corn of thy Neighbours, then thou mayest pluck the Ears with thine hand,*

band, but thou shalt not move a Sickle unto thy Neighbour's standing Corn.

Bishop Patrick in his Commentary on this place says, that the Jewish Doctors extended this Law, (and indeed the Reason of the Law extended it) not only to *Grapes and Corn*, the two mention'd Particulars; but to *Olives, Figs, Dates*, and all common eatable Fruits: And (a) *Josephus* confirms this by applying the Law to *ripe Fruits of this kind in general*, and adding that the benefit of this Indulgence reached not only to Jews, but to all Travellers (whether Natives or not) on the high way in Judæa; who had a Right by vertue of this Law, to eat of any ripe Fruits that they met with, as freely as if they were their own Property. This then being a Part of the Common Law of the Country, and no man having such a Property in his Fruit-trees, as to exclude Travellers and Passengers from this Benefit, *Jesus* would have done no Injury to the Owner of this Fig-tree, if he had found Figs upon it, and gathered them; because he would only have done what he had a Right to do, and what all his Countrymen lawfully did on the like occasion. What then must we say of this Author, who insinuates that *Jesus would have been a Rob-Orchard, if he had had an Opportunity?* Vile insinuation! and no less Weak than Vile, since it is founded on an Ignorance of this Jewish Law which was so easy to be known!

I come then to the

3. §. and last Objection which is this, *What Right had Jesus to smite this Tree with a Curse, when it was none of his Property?*

(a) Antiq. Jud. L. 4. c. 8. Μὴ δὲ ὁπόρας ἀκμαζέουσας κολύειν ἀπλεῖς τὰς ὁδῶν βαδίζουσας, ἀλλ' ὥς ἐξ ὑγιάνων αὐτοῖς ἐπιτρέπεν ἐμπίπλασθαι, καὶ ἐσχώριοι τυσχαίνεσι καὶ ξένοι.

And to this several sufficient answers have been frequently given; for brevity's sake I shall content my self with giving One at present;

According to the Christian Scheme, which supposes *Jesus* to be (what I have prov'd him in my first Part to be) a Prophet sent from God and acting by the Spirit of God, there is no Difficulty in justifying this his behaviour: For God must be allowed to have a superiour Right over all things, and a Property in them of a higher Nature than any that a Human Owner of them has. Not only *all the Beasts of the Forest are his* (as God himself declares by the *Psalmist*, l. 10.) but *so are the Cattle upon a thousand Hills*: and it is in vertue of this Right that God is often found in the *Old Testament* threatning the *Jews* by his Prophets, that he wou'd lay their Land waste, and destroy all the Trees with their Fruits, for the Punishment of their Sins: And thus we find in our Saviour's days that the *Jews* had (a) *filled up the measure of their Iniquities*, and were at this very time, when *Jesus* smote the Fig-tree with a Curse, devoted with their Country to Ruin and Destruction: *The things which belong'd to their peace, were even then hid from their Eyes*, as he tells them *Luke* xix. 42. and he goes on in the following verses to pronounce the Sentence already determin'd against *Jerusalem*.

And we find farther that the Execution of this Sentence was put into the hands of *Jesus* under the title (b) of *the son of man*. Where then was the Injustice, if that Judgment, which he was authoriz'd to execute upon the whole Land and all the Produce thereof, he executed (for a wise and good-natur'd Reason, as I shall shew by and by) upon one Tree in his Life-time? Where all

(a) *Matt.* xxiii. 32.

(b) *Matt.* xxiv. 30, 37, 38. *Mark* xiii. 26. *Luke* xxi. 27, 36.

things are justly consign'd over to Ruin, no Injury is done if some part has its Punishment hasten'd and brought upon it before the time is come for the rest: as when several men are sentenc'd to Death for the same Crime, it is no Injustice to call immediately for the Forfeit of one Life among them, and leave the others for some more Convenient season. It is just the same with a Nation consider'd as consisting of Parts; the Ruin of some Cities, Houses, or Trees may justly take place of the rest, where all are given over to Destruction: And therefore *Jesus*, if he had a Right to execute a Curse on the whole Land of *Judæa*, must be allowed a Right to execute a Curse upon so small a Part of it, as this Fig-tree was.

And less Objection still is to be made against it, if he design'd the Punishment of this Tree for an Emblem to the *Jews* of what their Case then was, and what their Punishment wou'd shortly be: for it was not *Passion* and *Disappointment* in not finding Figs on it, when he was Hungry, that set him to work this Miracle; that is Mr. *W*'s ill-natur'd suggestion, for which he has no Authority unless his own Experience of what Lengths of Mischief *Passion* and *Disappointment* uses to carry Him. But this action of *Jesus* had a higher and a more Worthy End and View in it; for St. *Matt.* xxi. 19. relates this proceeding of *Jesus* towards the Fig-tree as well as St. *Mark*, and joins to the account of it two Parables, which he spake about the same time to the *Jews*, and which he concludes with this remarkable application, *Therefore I say unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the Fruits thereof*, ver. 43. which is a Key to open our Saviour's meaning in his blasting the Fig-tree as well as in his two Parables, for from thence this Moral may be gather'd, that the *Fig-tree* is the Jewish

Jewish Nation, that the *Kingdom of God* or the Gospel was preached to them, but they were Barren; they would not repent, and (as *John the Baptist* speaks) *bring forth fruits meet for Repentance*. They were therefore taught by this Miracle perform'd on the Barren Fig-tree, that the Gospel wou'd be remov'd from them, and that (for their rejecting it) they wou'd be left to their own *Unfruitful works of Darknes*, and would be consign'd over to Destruction, to *wither away* as a Nation, and be *dried up from the roots*. And the Sentence, *Let no man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever*, has been hitherto verify'd, that unhappy Nation having continued in the same barren state, and lying to this day under the Moral of the Curse pronounced upon that Fig-tree.

It was very usual among the Easterns to express Things by Actions; variety of Instances to this purpose might be given out of the *Old and New Testament*; and therefore when the Warning, given by this Action to the whole Nation of the *Jews*, was so Charitable and Benevolent an one, it is meer Perverseness to cavil at this Miracle, because it was a Destructive one to the Tree; It was so, but it meant to prevent the Destruction of a Nation; and that, you will allow, was the Reverse of a *Malicious and Ill-natur'd* Act: But, strip it of this Moral, and suppose the Fig-tree to have only undergone the Punishment to which the whole Land was doom'd; was it Therefore no Miracle? may not God work a Miracle to Chastise as well as to Bless? Who or What prescribes him a Law to the Contrary? *Ananias* was struck Dead, and *Elymas* the Sorcerer was smitten with Blindness; and were there Therefore no Miracles in these two Cases, because there was Destruction? This way of arguing, would be to rob God of his power of inflicting Extraordinary Punishments on Sinners.

Why then does Mr. *W.* assert that this Action of *Jesus* is (a) *not to be accounted for, because it was to the Destruction of another man's harmless and inoffensive Tree?* And why are the Excellent Arch-Bishop *Wake* and the Ingenious Mr. *Chandler* summon'd so rudely before him, to reconcile with this and some other Miracles the general Notion of a Miracle, which the One taught, and the Other (as he says) approved? For to execute a justly deserved Punishment upon some Persons or Things, especially if with a View to promote some great and general good, is an Action consistent with the Perfections of God to interest himself in, such as answers to the Character of God as a Good and Gracious Being, and shews his Love to Mankind and his Inclination to do them good, which with Mr. *Chandler* are some of the Rules of Judging, by whom Miracles are perform'd. The Best and most Gracious of Earthly Monarchs do sometimes Punish particular Persons when Criminal, in Love and Goodness to their Subjects; and a contrary behaviour would have more of Cruelty than Benevolence in it. And this I have shew'd to be the Case in the *Driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*, in the *permitting the Devils to enter into the Herd of Swine to their Destruction*, and in this Miracle (now before us) of *blasting the Fig-tree*: All which I have prov'd to have been done by way of Punishment deservedly inflicted, and in such Cases Punishment is no Injury. This therefore is a full Defence of the Arch-bishop's and Mr. *Chandler's* Notions of a True Miracle, and it comes long before *latter Lammas*, contrary to Mr. *W's* Expectation.

I think that there is nothing material on this head, which that Author has started, and which

I have left unanswer'd; unless it be his Peculiar reasoning in p. 17, against the Letter of his Miracle from what *Jesus* says to his Disciples on this occasion, in *Matt. xxi. 21.* *that if they had Faith, they should not only do what was done to the Fig-tree; but if they should say to this Mountain, Be thou remov'd and cast into the Sea, it should be done:* Because this was never Literally donẽ by the Disciples, that we read of, therefore he concludes that *Jesus* did not Literally curse the Fig-tree. But might not the Disciples have a Power given them to do this among other Miracles, without ever having occasion to shew their Power in this Instance? There might be neither a *Failure in Jesus's Promise*, nor a *Want of Faith* in them for the doing this Miracle, and yet it might never have been perform'd, because no proper Opportunity might have called for this Demonstration of their Power: And with this answer I leave him to be convinc'd, if he be capable of Conviction.

In his Criticisms upon the Greek Text, particularly upon *St. Matthew's* words, which he renders thus, p. 29. *(a) Not as yet, or not until now, against the Age has fruit grown on thee,* he has follow'd no Commentator, and, I can promise him, will never be followed by any: The Translation is his Own, and tho' he is safe now, yet when a School-boy he would have suffer'd for such Stuff as he now dictates with the Air of a Master.

But Ignorance may be excus'd in one who has so much greater Faults to answer for: Before I close the Subject of this Miracle, I shall give the Reader a Sample or two of his barefac'd Dishonesty in Quotations from the Fathers.

St. Austin (according to him, p. 4.) *very plainly says that this Fact in Jesus, upon supposition that it*

(a) Μηκέτι ἐκ σὺ καρπὸς γένηται εἰς τὸ διῶνα.

was done, was a foolish one : that Father's Words, as Mr. *W.* himself has quoted them at the bottom of his page, are these, *Hoc Factum, nisi Figuratum, stultum invenitur*, i. e. *This which Jesus did, was a Foolish Action, unless it had some Figurative meaning.* Is this saying that it was Foolish, upon supposition that it was done? Does not St. *Austin* expressly allow it to have been done, when he says *hoc factum*? And does not he directly charge the Folly upon something Else, upon a supposition that it had no other meaning than a Literal one? A Pen and a Spirit like that of St. *Austin* might put this Forgery in such a Light as Mr. *W.* would not care for.

Again p. 16. he brings in *Origen* saying that there are some things spoken of in the Evangelists as Facts, which were never transacted. But (a) *Origen* speaks of the Historical parts of the Scripture in general, and shews what he means, by the Instances which he gives out of the Old and New Testament, such as *God's walking in the Garden in the cool of the Day*; his being spoken of as having *Hands, and Mouth, and Ears*; and with regard to the Gospel precepts he Instances in the *plucking out a right eye, and cutting off a right hand*, as things that might possibly be done, but never were : And then he subjoins a request to his Readers not to think that it was his Opinion, that, because some things were not done according to the Letter of the History, therefore he would destroy the Credit of the Scripture History.

If Mr. *W.* then read the one Passage he should have read the other, and not have brought in *Origen* as giving a Testimony which he expressly disclaims.

(a) *Historia Scripturæ interdum inserit quædam vel minus gesta, vel quæ omnino geri non possunt; interdum quæ possunt geri, nec tamen gesta sunt. De Principiis. L. 4.*

In p. 9. he quotes St. *John* of Jerusalem as saying, *Arbor non est justè siccata*, the Fig-tree was not Justly dried up. But these words are only a piece of the Sentence which runs thus, *Dicat aliquis, Si tempus non erat Ficorum, non peccavit Ficus, quæ fructum non habebat : si autem non peccavit, non est justè siccata*, i. e. It may be objected, that if it was not the time of Figs, then the Tree was not in fault for having none; and if it was not in fault, then it was not Justly dried up. Where the Reader sees that what Mr. *W.* quotes as that Father's Sentiment, is only an Objection which he puts into the mouth of some Adversary to Christianity, some *W.* of that Age: To which Objection he immediately subjoins an Answer (such as it is), which he fairly thought a sufficient one, but which Mr. *W.* has Unfairly taken no notice of.

These three Instances may suffice to shew what Credit should be given to an Author who wants Common Honesty, and who in defiance (as it were) of Truth advances Falsehoods in the very Face of Detection: And upon the whole it appears, that his Discourse against this Miracle of the Fig-tree is as Barren as the Fig-tree it self was, and that whoever comes to it with Judgment, will find *nothing but Leaves thereon*.

IV. The fourth Miracle which I shall endeavour to set free from the Objections which Mr. *W.* has rais'd against it, is that of (a) *Jesus's turning Water into Wine at the Marriage Feast in Cana of Galilee*. John ii. 1, &c. The Literal Story of which he has attack'd under the Character of a Jewish Rabbi, with all the Spite to Christianity that the Ancient Jewish Rabbins shew'd to its

(a) Mr. *W.*'s Discourse 4. p. 23.

Founder, and with such Ill Manners as no Modern *Jews* among Us (I am persuaded) would offer to a Church and State so Indulgent to them as Ours is. But whether the Invective come from *Jew* or *Gentile*, from the suppos'd *Rabbi* or Mr. *W.* himself, it is as much Wanting in Proof, as it is abounding in Malice, and to make good Sense and Argument of it would require a Miracle as much as to *turn Water into Wine*.

But an Outcry he has rais'd, and there seems at first Sight to be some Difficulty in the Story, as he has manag'd it; and therefore I will examine to the Bottom all that He has advanc'd in his Own or the *Rabbi's* name. And in doing it I shall take the same Course as I have hitherto done, tho' I now find more Difficulty than formerly; for his Objections against this Miracle lye in such Confusion, that this part of his Discourse is more peculiarly (like the Earth at First) *without form and void*, and there is such a *Darkness upon the Face of it* as requires some Skill and Pains to bring it into any Order.

However the Chief Objections are contain'd (or at least will be answer'd) under these three Heads.

How came *Jesus* to vouchsafe his Presence at a Wedding? p. 30.

Why did he supply the Guests with so large a Quantity of Wine, when it was said that they had *well drank* already? p. 24, 31.

How came he to give such an answer to his Mother, as *Woman what have I to do with thee*? p. 32.

1. §. To the first Question, *How came Jesus to vouchsafe his Presence at a Wedding*? I may answer with another Question, Why should he *not* have gone thither, when he was invited? Tradition says that the Persons, whose Wedding was then celebrating, were *Alpheus* or *Cleopas*, and her who in the

Sacred

Sacred Scripture is called *Mary* the Sister of *Jesus*'s Mother: but, without depending upon Tradition, it seems not unlikely from some Circumstances of the story that they were either Relations of the Virgin *Mary*, or her Intimate Acquaintance; for we find Her Interesting her self that the Guests might be supply'd when the Wine was wanting, and taking upon her to give the Servants Directions to do whatever her Son should bid them do, ver. 9. Now if *Jesus* and his Disciples were invited to come, and if the New-married Couple were of his Kindred or Acquaintance, what reason can be assign'd, why he ought to have declin'd the Invitation? Is it Certain that such Indecencies, as Wife and Good men should not be Witnesses to, are practis'd at all Weddings? or might not the Company have been restrained by the Presence of *Jesus* from any thing of Levity and Unbecoming Joy? How does this Author know how soon *Jesus* retir'd after the Meal was over? or why may not he suspect that *Jesus* introduc'd such a Religious Discourse, while he was there, as was suitable to the Solemn occasion? If he had read what the best Authors say of the Jewish Weddings, he wou'd have found that such Liberties were not taken in Them as we see too often practis'd among us. But it seems that (according to Mr. *W.*) such *Excesses in drinking were there indulged*, as it was not fit for *Jesus* to see and countenance: This is the Material part, and therefore I proceed to

2. §. The second Objection which this Author has made, viz. *How came Jesus to supply the Guests with so large a Quantity of Wine, when it is said, that they had well drunk already?* And to clear up this matter the better, I shall prove these two things, That there is no foundation in the Text

to conclude that there was any Excess of that sort committed there; and that the Quantity of Wine, which *Jesus* miraculously provided, was not such as must needs have made him accessory to any Excess among the Guests.

For proving the first of these, let us consider the force of the words which are made the ground of the Objection, *Every man at the beginning doth set forth Good Wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is Worse: but thou hast kept the Good Wine until now*, ver. 10. But we are to remember who it is that says this; it is *the Governour of the Feast*, speaking to the *Bridegroom*: and the Drift of his Speech is only to shew, that one thing usually observ'd in such Feasts was not observ'd in This; for in Them the Best Wine was us'd to be brought out first, whereas Here it was produc'd *not* at the first: the Circumstance of men's having *well drunk* in other Feasts when the Worse Wine was serv'd up, does not necessarily require any Parallel in this Feast; it may have been only thrown in by the by, as it is a known and allow'd thing for Poets in working up a similitude, to throw in little Circumstances which have no resemblance to the Fact which the similitude is illustrating. What the *Governour of the Feast* said on this occasion was as True and as Pertinent, if the Company present had not *well drunk*, because, his Intention was only to shew that there was a wide Difference in one Instance between what was done at This and what was commonly done at Other Entertainments: Is it not a piece of Violence then to force every part of the Speech into a Parallel, and to conclude from such a Chance Expression as This that the Guests at the Wedding Dinner had already drank to Excess?

But allowing (what is so unreasonably contend-
ed for) that the Phrase, *when men have well
drunk*, ἕταν μεθύσῃσι, is a Description of the
Condition which the Guests were Then in; yet
this Objector will get little by it, because it does
not necessarily carry any Ill Sense along with it.
The word is often us'd for drinking more than
men usually do, but without any Intemperance.
And can any Serious Writer think that St. *John*
meant it otherwise here? Is it to be imagin'd that
the Apostle intended to expose his Master's beha-
viour on this occasion? or that he wou'd have
us'd the word, if he had not known that it bore
an Innocent Sense as well as Vicious one? *μεθύειν*
in its primitive signification is only *drink-
ing after the Sacrifice*, and nothing in the Deriva-
tion of the word determines this to be done to
any Excess, or beyond the proper bounds of Joy
on a Festival: And if besides the Etymology of
the Word, an Instance be requir'd, in which it is
thus us'd for drinking *not* Intemperately, we find
one in the LXX version of *Genesis* xliii. 34. where
it is said that *Joseph's* brethren ἐμεθύσθησαν μετ'
αὐτοῦ; and yet the Circumstances of that Feast,
which *Joseph* made for his Brethren, plainly shew,
that no Excess or Approach to it is intended by
the Expression; for they knew him not then to
be any other than the *Governour of Egypt*, nay it
is said that *they were afraid of him*, ver. 18. and
their whole Behaviour before and at the Feast
must convince us that they were too much on
their Guard, and too solicitous about their own
Safety, to give way to any Intemperance in his
Presence. And the same sense of the like word is
to be seen in what God (according to the LXX
version) says to the *Jews*, *Hag.* i. 6. where com-
plaining that they neglected to build his Temple,
he tells them that on this account he had not
blessed the Fruits of their Land with the Ordina-

nary Increase, *Ye have sown much, and bring in little ; ye eat, but ye have not enough ; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink :* the Greek is ἐπιεῖτε καὶ ὥσπερ μέθυ. Are we to think that the LXX Interpreters intended to make God use the word here in the sense that Mr. *W.* gives it in St. *John* ? for could that be a Punishment worthy of God to inflict ? or could it be a Blessing, fit to encourage them to expect, that they should drink *as μέθυ* to Excess, as this Author would understand it ?

Every candid man then must acknowledge that it is a meer Cavil, first to suppose the words to be spoken of the Guests at this Feast, when there is no Appearance that it was a Description of them ; and then to give the Words a Vicious sense, which they do not necessarily bear, and which there is all the Reason imaginable to believe that they were not in this Place intended to bear. This way of Interpreting may shew men's Good-will to Infidelity, but it shews a very Ill Will to every thing else.

The next thing which I was to prove was this ; that the Quantity of Wine which *Jesus* produc'd on this Occasion was not such as must needs have made him accessory to any Excess among the Guests.

A *Rabbi*, or a *W.* might have known that the Jewish (a) Marriages were celebrated with Feastings, not only on the day of the Solemnity, (as with us) but for six or seven days after : and that at these Feasts, not only all their Relations, Neighbours and Acquaintance were invited, but it was well taken if any others (tho' not invited) would come to partake of the Entertainment, and bear a share in the Joy of the Occasion : A Custom which

(a) See Calmet's Dissertation, *Sur les Mariages des Hebreux.*

to this day prevails among Us too, in some of the most remote parts of our Country. And as to this Marriage, tho' the Evangelist's words are render'd (a) *The third day there was a Marriage, &c.* yet they may be as well translated thus, (b) *On the third day a Marriage-Feast was celebrated, &c.* Some think (and not without appearance of Reason) that by *the third day* is meant the third day of the Marriage Feast; and whether that Interpretation be allow'd or not, yet since it is so well known that the *Jews* feasted seven days on such occasions, and since it is not said on what Day this Miracle was wrought, we are at Liberty to suppose that it might as well have been on the third day after the Marriage as on any other.

That there were great Numbers present at it, may be gather'd from there being *a Governour of the Feast* appointed for this occasion; and it is probable that many more than were expected came there on that day, to see *Jesus* and his Disciples, of whom they had heard much Talk; on this account, or because on the preceding days the Bride and Bridegroom had entertained more Guests than they had looked and provided for, the Wine might fall short, which they had laid up for the whole seven days Feasting: Supposing then that the Quantity of Wine which *Jesus* made at this Feast was as Large as our Translation represents it, yet why should not Mr. *W.* suppose (what is very Probable) that the Wine thus Miraculously produc'd was design'd not only to supply the want of that day, but of the succeeding ones, till the *whole time* of Feasting was ended? Ill nature always makes the Worst of every thing; but an unprejudic'd

(a) Τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ γάμος ἐγένετο, &c.

(b) So the *Syriac* renders it in this place, and *Grotius* proves that γάμος has this Signification in several places of the Sacred Scripture. See his Note on *Matt.* xxii. 2.

man may (upon this reasonable Supposition) believe that there might be no Excess countenanc'd or practis'd, tho' the Supply of Wine was so Plentiful.

But what if our Translation should not be so Accurate here as in other Places? What if the *six Waterpots* did not hold so much as *two or three Firkins apiece*? Mr. W. himself says, p. 26. that if he had been the Translator, they should not have held above two or three pints apiece, which measure is as agreeable to the Original as Firkin. If so, why is the Miracle to be flouted at? and why should not he content himself to raise an Outcry against the Translation? He might have known that the Learned of all Communions have of late looked more nicely into the $\mu\epsilon\tau\rho\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$ or measure here spoken of, and have brought it much lower than a Firkin: The LXX Translators in 2 Chron. iv. 5. use the word $\mu\epsilon\tau\rho\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$ for the Bath of the Jews, and Calmet in his *Dissertation on the Antiquity of Money*, makes the Bath to contain less than 30 French Pints, i. e. less than six Gallons of our English Measure: Lami sets it still lower, and makes it hold very little more than twenty French Pints, which brings the measure down to under four Gallons: Le Clerc and others mentioned by Calmet, says that the $\mu\epsilon\tau\rho\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$ held about twenty five French pounds of Water, which falls short of three Gallons of our measure: And the Learned Bishop Cumberland (whose Accuracy in this part of Knowledge is allow'd by all) proves that most probably the $\mu\epsilon\tau\rho\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$ of Syria is meant here, and That he computes to have held less than one English Gallon; and according to this Reckoning the whole six *Waterpots* might not contain more than about fourteen or fifteen Gallons of English Measure; a Quantity not very Large, if we allow (as we must) that there were great Numbers present at the Feast;

or

or that, what was not then drank, might be a seasonable Supply for what wou'd be wanting at the Feast of the ensuing days.

When the Learned, tho' differing in their Opinions, do yet all agree to fix the Quantity lower than a *Firkin*, and some of them so very much below it, as we have seen; is it Fair and Ingenious in Mr. *W.* to take occasion from an Errour of the Translation to set the whole Letter of the Miracle at Defiance? especially when he himself knew (as he says) how to rectify the Translation by making *Pints* of the *Firkins*? especially when, if the Quantity were allowed to be so large as the Translation makes it, he knows that to provide Plenty is not to encourage Excess; what was more than suffic'd, might be laid up for other opporutnities: And he may as well charge God with promoting Drunkenness whenever he blessed the Vineyards of the *Jews* with any Extraordinary Increase.

Upon the whole then, it appears that what Mr. *W.* says p. 24. that when *Jesus* turn'd the Water into Wine, *the Company were already drunk*, and what his *Rabbi* says in his Vulgar strain, p. 31. that *they were more than half seas over*, is a Fiction of their Own; and since it may be fairly presum'd, and is by Mr. *W.* own'd, that the Quantity of Wine then Created, was not so Large as our Translation represents it; and since (if it was so Large) it is probable that it was intended for a seasonable Supply upon the remainder of the seven days Feasting, I conclude, that neither the Wit of Mr. *W.* nor (what he has a greater Share of) his Malice can make this Circumstance any Good Argument against the Letter of the Miracle.

3. §. There remains now only one more Objection to it, which is what *Jesus* reply'd to his Mother when she said *They have no Wine*; to which he

he answer'd, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* ver. 4. From which his captious *Rabbi* very boldly concludes, that *Jesus himself was a little in for it; or he had never spoke so waspishly and snappishly to his Mother.* p. 32. Whatever a common Reader may think of the words which our Saviour says to her; yet a man of Learning might, and should know that *γυνή*, which we render *Woman*, was no Title of Disrespect or Indifference, as it seems to be in our Translation. For there was a time when *Jesus* call'd his Mother by this Appellation, and yet was certainly neither *Snappish* nor *Waspish* towards her; for when he was hanging on the Cross, and recommending both his Mother to the Care of his beloved Apostle, and that Apostle to the Affection of his Mother, he said, *John xix. 26. (a) Woman, behold thy Son.* The word *γυνή* was an honourable Title, and often us'd by the best Writers when the highest mark of Respect is intended; of which many Instances might be given; particularly we find the polite (b) *Xenophon* putting this word into the mouth of one of the *Persian* Chiefs, when he was addressing himself to a Captive Lady of the highest Quality, and comforting her under her unfortunate Circumstances. The Expression is so common in this Sense that I shall offer no more Instances of it; but pass on to the remainder of *Jesus's* answer, *What have I to do with Thee?* These words are generally understood as a Rebuke to her, and so they may be without giving room for any Objection against the Letter of the Story; much more for the Conclusion which Mr. *W's* Friend has drawn from it: For it is probable that she was desirous to see him work a Miracle, and

(a) *Γύναι, ἰδὲ ὁ υἱός σου.*

(b) *Ὁ γεραίτερος ἔπει, Θάρρα, εἰ γύναι, καλὸν μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἀγαθὸν ἀκούμεν καὶ τὸ σὸν ἀνδρα εἶναι, &c.* *Cyrop. Lib. 5. p. 317. Edit. Hutchinson.*

that a little Vanity prompted her to this Desire; and was it an unsuitable Rebuke, to tell her (for the words import no more) that in the business of manifesting his Glory by Miracles she was to leave him to do what he thought proper? This very Phrase is sometimes us'd in the Scriptures, where nothing of Anger is conceiv'd, where only some dislike is express'd, and a gentle Check or Rebuke is given; for can we suppose that *David*, when (2 Sam. xvi. 10.) he said *What have I to do with you, ye Sons of Zeruiab?* was Angry or Waspish which *Abishai* for proposing to kill *Shimei* who had curs'd him, when *Abishai* stuck by him so faithfully in that great Defection, and meant what he propos'd out of a Friendly affection to *David*? It was a Rebuke, it is true, and so was This which *Jesus* reply'd to his Mother: But it was a Justifiable one; for whatever Obedience he owed to her as a Son, he ow'd none to her as a Prophet and Worker of Miracles: In this Capacity he was the *Son* of God only, there was no Relation between Him and the Virgin *Mary*; and therefore in what she meant by saying *They have no Wine*, she exceeded her Authority, and was justly reprov'd for it. But is this of Weight to overthrow a Miracle? All the other Objections I have shewn to be False and Ill-grounded; this is the only one that has any Truth in it, and I will venture to leave it to the Judgment of any Impartial man, whether the single Circumstance of our Saviour's rebuking his Mother in such a Case is sufficient to call in Question the Reality of a Miracle so particularly and so plainly related by the Evangelist.

I have now finished what I intended to say in vindication of these two Miracles of *Jesus*, his causing the Barren *Fig-tree* to wither, and his turning the *Water* into *Wine*; and I assure the Reader that the same Ignorance and Dishonesty furnishes

Mr. *W.* with his Objections against the rest of the Miracles : But, before I conclude, I must again take Notice (as I have frequently done) that having in my First Part established the Resurrection of *Jesus* beyond all Doubt and Contradiction, I have laid a sure Foundation for the Credit of all the Miracles which the Evangelists have ascribed to him : Allow but That to have been a Real one, and you must allow all the rest which are reported by the same Authors. It is not enough to pick here and there a Hole in their Relation, and set up a few Objections against them, which the more Ignorant a man is, the more plentifully he may be furnished with : Nothing less than the shewing that some part of the Literal Story is absolutely Impossible to have happen'd, or that something which *Jesus* is said to have done is Absolutely Inconsistent with the Divine Perfections, I say nothing less than This can make a Reasonable man Disbelieve, and even Then his Disbelief will go no farther than to the Circumstance which has This Weight lying on it. But the Objections, which Mr. *W.* has thrown out against the Miracles that have been consider'd, and which may be supposed to be the Best that his Party could furnish him with, are so Weak and Feeble, so Blind and Lane, such very *Hospital* ones, that while He and They are giving up their Character as Christians, they are forfeiting it too as Scholars : even an Adversary would see with Pity the Advances they have made in Dulness ; they are *vel Priamo miseranda manus* : at least they would be so, if Ignorance was their only Fault ; but it has appear'd to the Reader in many Instances how little Regard the Author of those *Discourses* pays to Truth, how little even to the Certainty of being Detected in Falsehoods : And when men have so Professedly (as it were) leap'd over the Bonds of Common Honesty,

Honesty, when they not only venture to be thus Immoral, but are come to despise the Shame of it, shall such as these set up for our Directors in Religion? Shall such as These have any Influence on our Faith, who neither Believe nor are to be Believed? who when they stripp'd their own Religion of Faith, tore off so much of Morality with it; who with all the Arts and Cheats of Impostors carry on their attacks against Christianity as a Cheat and Imposture, thereby Practising what they Write against, and putting on the very Character which they would fix upon the Apostles? Whoever they be that have been so carry'd away with the Bewitching Pleasure of Novelty as to be fond of such Writings, their Recovery is very difficult, if the Excellent and truly *Pastoral Letter* of the *Lord Bishop of London* has not yet brought them back to a serious Consideration; They may have been mis-led, but they have no Excuse for continuing in their Error; for nothing but the Badness of the Cause can exceed the Badness of the Methods it is supported with. And the Writings of such Infidels are as Weak, as they are Dishonest; they are an Insult upon the Common sense of Mankind, and every Reader must have the lowest Opinion of such *Discourses* as suppose either that they shall find men Fools, or that they shall make them so.

F I N I S.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th inst. in relation to the above mentioned matter. I am sorry to hear that you are not satisfied with the result of the proceedings in this case. I have, however, no objection to your making such use of the facts as you may think proper. I am, Sir, very respectfully,
 Your obedient servant,
 J. M. Smith

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THE
MIRACLES
OF
JESUS
VINDICATED.

PART IV.

CONTAINING
A Defence of the Literal Story of JESUS's
healing the INFIRM Man at the
POOL of BETHESDA,
AND
His healing the PARALYTICK, who
was let down thro' the ROOF.

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THE
MIRACLES of JESUS
VINDICATED.

PART IV.

T is now above four Months since I publish'd the third Part of *The Miracles of Jesus vindicated* in Answer to Mr. *Woolston's Discourses*; the greatest Part of which time I waited to see, whether He had any thing Material to object against what I had advanced in That and the Two preceding Tracts: But finding that no Reply was made by that Author, or his Abettors, (if he had any,) I proceeded farther on the same Subject; and the following Enquiry into the Literal Account of two other Miracles, which that Gentleman had made the Great Objects of his Ridicule, was finished, before the Honourable the Judges of the *King's Bench* had pass'd Sentence upon him for his Infamous Writings. But since a Legal Restraint seems now to be laid upon him, and he is not left at Liberty (I conceive) to

make any Reply for the future, I should have chosen to suppress what was prepar'd for the Publick View, if I had not been encourag'd to think, that the following Sheets contain something which may be of Use for the Information of the Reader.

In my Enquiry into these Miracles I found that something New (to Me at least) offer'd it self to my thoughts; and some Passages which I had met with in my Reading seem'd to give a clearer Solution of the Difficulties started, than the Common one does: Particularly in the Account of the Miracle wrought by the troubling of the Waters at *the Pool of Bethesda*, I found Reason to differ a little from the receiv'd Opinions of the Commentators on that Chapter; and what I have propos'd as New on that Head, I have all along endeavour'd to support by such Authorities as may seem to make my Supposition appear at least not Improbable; This (methinks) may be said with some Certainty, that if I am in the Right, Mr. *W.* is more clearly in the Wrong than upon any other supposition; tho' after all I am very sensible that a Sufficient Answer may be given to all his Objections, without thrusting any Criticism or Conjecture of Mine upon the Reader as necessary in the Dispute.

But before I enter upon the Subject, I think it material to prepare the way with one Observation upon a Piece which Mr. *W.* lately published under the Title of *A Defence of his Discourses* &c. where that Author endeavours to shift the State of the Controversy between Himself and his Opposers. The True Question, upon which I and others closed with him is This, *Whether the Literal Account of the Miracles ascrib'd to Jesus be True*; not, *Whether the Miracles (besides their Literal Meaning) may not have a Figurative and Allegorical one*; much less is it, *Whether the Fathers turn'd all the Actions of Jesus into Allegory or not*: For had he done nothing more than add a Spiritual Sense to them, or had he only try'd to shew that the Fathers delighted in making them

Emblems of whatever their Wit and Fancy suggested, he might have gone on writing as long he pleased, without any Opposers, and perhaps without any Readers.

For what is it to the Cause of Truth whether the Fathers or He could find out more Meanings of *Jesus's* Miracles than the Evangelists thought proper to give us? But Mr. *W.*'s *Discourses* do expressly and frequently deny that the Miracles of *Jesus* were *Truly and Really wrought*; and he asserts, that, *Literally understood, they are full of Absurdities, Improbabilities and Contradictions.* And yet in this *Defence*, p. 26. he would have us believe, in regard to the Story of the *Buyers and Sellers* driven out of the Temple, that *it is to no purpose to support the Letter of the Story* against him, *unless it can be prov'd that the Miracle neither was nor could be a Shadow or Resemblance of something Future.* And the same he had said before concerning all the Miracles of *Jesus*, *Disc. 2. p. 70. viz.* that he *who would write against him to the Purpose, must prove two things: That the Fathers did not hold Jesus's Miracles to be Typical and Figurative; and That those Miracles neither will, nor can receive a Mysterious Accomplishment.* On the Contrary, if the Learned Bishop of *St. Davids* and other Writers against Mr. *W.* should allow, that All the Fathers did affect to turn *Jesus's* Miracles into Allegory; and if they should allow too, that their Allegories and Mr. *W.*'s are Just and Well-grounded, yet these Writings might be full and proper Answers to His, because they support the Truth of the Literal Story, which he so often and so peremptorily denies: For we may clearly prove the Literal Meaning, tho' we don't attempt to disprove the Allegorical one, if they be two distinct things; as every one of his *Discourses* plainly makes them, while it denies the Letter of the Miracles, and endeavours to set up the Allegory only. If He can consider them separately, so may We; This Liberty I have taken, and shall again take in the ensuing Discourse; perhaps

haps in some Instances I may allow that the Miracles recorded in the Gospel were Typical; for I have no Quarrel with Types and Figures: I only oppose one who would set them up to the Ruin of the Letter; and the Drift of This and my preceding Discourses is only to shew, that the Miracles ascrib'd to *Jesus* were truly wrought by him, and that there is an Account of the Literal Story to be given, which is clear of all the Objections that Mr. *W.* has so unskilfully made to them.

In this view I proceed to consider

I. The Story of the Miracle, or rather Miracles, wrought at the *Pool of Bethesda*; of which St. *John* ch. v. has given us a particular Account, and which Mr. *W.* (a) calls a *Camel, of a Monstrous size for Absurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities*, and he has spent above twenty Pages in fixing these upon it.

But for the Clearer Answer to all his Objections on this Head, the Reader is desir'd to observe that in this Narration of St. *John* there are two distinct Miracles to be separately consider'd, That which was wrought by the *Pool* after the Water of it was *troubled*; and That which *Jesus* wrought upon the *Infirm Man* who lay there: The former is only a Narration, in which our Saviour is not at all concern'd, nor the Miracle which he wrought on the *Impotent Man*: so that if we could not account for the particular Circumstances that attended the Relation of the First, it would not in the least affect the Miracle of our Saviour's healing this Man: the Truth of which Fact only we are engag'd to vindicate. However because This is the Introductory Story in St. *John*, and because Mr. *W.* has been very large and strong in his Objections against the Letter of it, I shall begin there.

I. §. Against the Sanative Virtue of the *Pool* in the Circumstances describ'd by the Evangelist Mr. *W.*

(a) Discourse 3. pag. 33.

has made several Objections by way of Question; but before I give an Answer to his Questions, I shall lay before the Reader, what I conceive to be the true Account of the Story; and I do this the rather, because I think that it has not been understood aright by the Generality of Commentators, whose Mistakes on this Article have helped to furnish our Author with some of those Difficulties, which he has so liberally bestow'd on the Miracle.

The State of the Case was this: At *Jerusalem*, near the Place called the *Sheep-Market*, or rather the *Sheep-gate* (mention'd by *Nehem.* ch. iii. i. and xii. 39.) there was a *Bath* built for the use of such of the Common People, as lov'd to swim and bathe themselves in the Water: This is the proper sense of the Word (a) *κολυμβήθρα*, used by *St. John* on this occasion, and by other Writers, and in the Old *Latin* Version (called the *Italic*) it was render'd by *Natatoria*, a *Bath*, or *Swimming-place*. Nothing was more Common or more Useful than such *Baths* in those warm Climates; *Josephus* (b) mentions some by this very name of *κολυμβήθρα* at *Jericho*, as us'd for the Exercise and Pleasure of Swimming; and it may be reasonably presum'd, that This at *Jerusalem*, and perhaps some others there, was built for the same purpose.

It has (I confess) been commonly suppos'd by Commentators, that this *Bath* or *Pool* (as our Trans-

(a) Thus *κολυμβᾶν* signifies to swim, in *Acts* xxvii. 43. and the old Translation of *Irenæus*, l. 2. c. 22. has *Paralyticum, qui juxta Natatoriam jacebat*: and the Three very Ancient *Latin* MSS. of the Gospels, which *Calmet* says contain the Old *Italic* Version before *St. Jerome* reform'd it, agree in rendring *κολυμβήθρα* by *Natatoria*, as may be seen by consulting the various Readings of those MSS. publish'd by *Calmet* at the end of his Commentary on the *Acts* of the Apostles.

(b) Ταῖς κολυμβήθραις ἐπισάντες, αἱ μεγάλοι περὶ τὴν αὐλὴν ἐτύγγανον, ἀνέβρυχον τὸ Θερμώτατον τῆς μεσημβρίας. *Antiqu.* Jud. l. 15. c. 3.

lation has it) serv'd either for washing of the Sheep before they were led into the Temple, or for washing the Entrails of Beasts sacrific'd in the Temple, or for receiving the Blood from the Trench round the Altar, which was thought to be convey'd hither by some subterraneous Channel; But those who led the way in these Opinions seem to have been (c) deceiv'd by joining, both in the *Greek* and the *Latin*, two words together in Construction, which have no relation to one another; besides, the proper sense of the word *καλυμνῆθρα* is inconsistent with every one of these Opinions; and (which is more) these Opinions are not easily reconcileable with the Situation of the *Sheep-gate*, near which this *Pool* stood; for the *Sheep-gate* was on the South-East Wall of *Jerusalem*, and therefore a great part of the City lay between That and the Temple, as the accurate Dr. *Lightfoot* has shew'd in his *Harmony of the Evangelists*, p. 666. On all these Accounts therefore I believe, that what is commonly called a *Pool*, was a *Bath*, built and us'd only for the Sport and Exercise of Swimming; for which it could never have been fit, if it had serv'd for any purpose relating to the Sacrifices of the Temple.

Around this *Bath* were built (as St. *John* says) (d) five *Porches*, or rather *Portico's*, *σολαι*: of which sort *Herod* built several at *Tyre* and *Berytus*; and the Design of them all, was for the Common People to walk in them under Covert in the Heat of the Day, if they had no

(c) The Generality of the Old *Greek* and *Latin* Commentators took *καλυμνῆθρα* and *piscina* or *natorium* to be us'd here in the Dative Case, and join'd them in Construction with *προβατικῇ* and *probatia*; in consequence of which Mistake, they thought that this *Pool* serv'd for the Purpose of Sacrifices in some one of the Ways before mention'd.

(d) If the *Bath* or *Pool* was four-square (as That is, which modern Travellers now generally call the *Pool of Bethesda*), Three sides of it had only a Single Portico, and the Fourth probably a Double one; which was the Case of the Outer-court of the Temple, or Court of the Gentiles.

mind to *Batbe*; and for such as had, they were of use for them to dress and undress themselves in the Shade: The *Bath* and the *Portico's* therefore serving for this purpose, might well have gain'd the name of *Bethesda*, i. e. the *House of Mercy or Kindness*; because the building them was a great Act of *Kindness* to the Common People, for whose sake they were erected, and whose Indispositions in hot Countries requir'd frequent Bathing. To suppose that they took this Name from any miraculous Cures wrought there, is to suppose without Authority or Occasion, and I submit to the Reader whether Mine is not a more natural Account of the Matter.

At this *Bath*, about the time of the *Feast*, ver. i. (most probably the *Feast of the Passover*,) a great multitude of *Impotent Folk*, of *Blind*, *Halt* and *Wither'd* lay in the *Portico's*, waiting for the moving of the *Water*; for (as *St. John* says) an *Angel* went down κατὰ καιρὸν (e)

(e) *At the season*: this is the Literal Translation of the Words κατὰ καιρὸν; and not at a certain season, as we commonly render it, for then it should have been κατὰ καιρὸν τινα. The Words κατὰ καιρὸν are us'd but in one other Place of the New Test. viz. in *Rom. v. 6.* where we read, *When we were without strength*, *Christ* κατὰ καιρὸν dy'd for the *Ungodly*, i. e. not in due time, but at the time of our being without strength. It is very often that we meet with καιρὸς thus us'd, when the word that should mark what that time or season is, is understood, and not express'd: thus πρὸ καιροῦ is us'd in *Matt. viii. 29.* and *xxiv. 45.* *1 Cor. iv. 5.* and ἐν καιρῷ in *Luke xii. 42.* and *xx. 10.* and *xxi. 8.* and *1 Pet. v. 6.* As some Word then may be here understood after κατὰ καιρὸν, so particularly the *Feast of the Passover* may; for we find many Instances in the LXX, where the time of the *Passover* is called καιρὸς, as in *Exod. xxiii. 15, 17.* and *xxxiv. 18.* *Numb. ix. 3.* and particularly ver. 7. προσενέσκει τὸ δῶρον Κυρίῳ κατὰ καιρὸν αὐτοῦ, to bring a Gift unto the Lord at the season of it, i. e. of the *Passover*, mention'd in the foregoing verse. From all which I conclude, that the Phrase κατὰ καιρὸν here, must be translated at the season, and that by it may be understood, the time of the *Passover* or *Feast*, which the Evangelist had spoken of at the beginning of the Chapter. I have but one thing more to add upon this head, which is, that these two words are not express'd at all in the above-mention'd Three Latin MSS. of *Calmer*, and *Dr. Wilkins* says that they are wanting in the *Coptick*, and many other Versions.

at the season (i. e. of the Passover) and troubled the Water, and whosoever then first after the troubling of the Water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever Disease he had. This is St. John's Account, and from This it does not appear that the Waters of this Pool, or Bath, had ever receiv'd this miraculously healing Virtue before or after the time of This Feast: The expression, *at the season*, does (as the Note shews) more Naturally confine it to this Passover, than suppose it to have been a standing and an Annual Miracle: the least that can be said, is, that there is full as much Liberty from the Scripture story to make My Supposition as any other; and Mine has several other Circumstances in its favour, which are a weight upon the contrary Opinion: for whatever is objected from the Silence of the Jewish Writers about this Miracle, is an Argument on my side, as far as it is any Argument: But the Silence of the Jews on this head, in their Discourses with Jesus, has much more weight in it against a suppos'd Annual Miracle of a long standing, it being not very Easy to conceive, why, when They so often insist upon having God for their Father, they don't urge this standing Miracle at *Bethesda*, as a Proof of it; and why they so often mention the Miracles of Moses, and the Prophets, without ever once mentioning so Remarkable a thing, as a Miraculous Cure wrought at this Pool, in their own days, for many years together, about the time of the Feast: Whereas upon my Supposition, nothing of this kind can be any Objection; the greater the Silence, the stronger the Proof. But on this head I shall have occasion to say more by and by.

It is well known that the Feast of the Passover lasted eight or nine days, including the Days of Unleaven'd Bread: and possibly this miraculous Quality of the Bath might have begun on the first day of it, or some few days before it: How the discovery of this its healing Virtue came to be made, we are not told: I should rather think that it was owing to Accident

cident than to any divine Revelation; It might be, that some *Jew* of an infirm or otherwise Diseas'd Constitution, bathing one day in this Pool for Pleasure and Recreation, might find himself cur'd all on a sudden, upon such violent Motion of the Water, as *troubled* it, and as he could not account for, there being no Wind stirring that was strong enough for that purpose. If He was thus cur'd, we may suppose, that upon hearing it others who were Diseased came there the same, or the next day, waiting for the troubling of the Water, and hoping for the same Extraordinary Relief: and what they thus hoped for, they are said to have found, whatever their Disease was, tho' only One, and he the First that stepped in, was cured upon each Motion of the Water: the Report of these Cures added to the former (we may suppose) drew every day greater Numbers together, the *Pool* being found to have this effect every day, and (for what we know) several times in a day.

From hence it is no wonder, if at length a great *Multitude of Impotent Folk, Blind, Halt, &c.* was got together at the *Pool*, when our Saviour passed by, which was on the *Sabbath-day*, or Third day after the Passover, and might be some days after the Miracle was begun.

This Motion of the Water is said by the Evangelist, to have been caus'd by the *Descent of an Angel* into the *Bath*; who might therein follow a known *Jewish* way of speaking, not affirming that an Angel did *visibly* descend there, but only that there was such a Divine Effect, which (*f*) in the Language of the Scriptures, and in the Eastern way of Expression, is

(*f*) *Grotius's* Note here is, *Non quòd videretur Angelus, sed quòd persuasum esset Judaïs talia à Deo, nonnisi per Angelos, agi; ita ex motu Aquæ præsentia Angeli intelligebatur, ut ex Terra motu.* Mat. xxviii. 2. And thus when the Host of Sennacherib was destroy'd in one night (probably by a Pestilential Hot Wind) it is said, 2 *Kings* xix. 35. that an *Angel of the Lord* went out and smote in the Camp of the *Assyrians*, &c. where the Angelical Presence was only Visible in its Effects.

said to be wrought by *Angels*, who are *Ministring Spirits*, and perform the Will of God on such occasions.

This is the Account of the Story which I offer to the Reader, as every way Consistent with St. *John's* Narration, and in some parts necessarily following from it, and confirm'd by other Good Authorities: and my Account has this peculiar Advantage, that it is clear of all the Difficulties which Mr. *W.* would fasten upon the Story; For

His first Question is this, *What was the true occasion of the Angel's descent? Was it to wash and bathe himself, or to impart a healing Quality to the Water?* p. 40, 41. And the first part of this Question he founds upon a peculiar Reading of the *Alex.* and other MSS. which have instead of κατέβαινεν the word (g) ἐλέετο: which This great Critick in the Greek Tongue thinks must necessarily signify, that the Angel washed or bathed himself; and therefore must suppose (as he says) some bodily Defilement or Heat contracted in the Celestial Regions, that wanted Refrigeration, or Purgation in these Waters. But a little more Knowledge of the Greek Tongue, might have taught him that λείδαι in the most approv'd Authors signifies sometimes no more than καταβαίνειν to plunge, or descend

(g) The *Alex. Med. & Cypr. Greek MSS.* and the *Æthiop. Version*, do all agree in reading ἐλέετο: and this, as it is a Justifiable Reading, may probably have been the True one: for I don't find that καταβαίνειν ἐν τινί is ever us'd to signify to descend into, any where in the New Test. or in the Old Test. LXX. except in *Judg. vii. 11.* where the common Reading is much to be suspected, and a MS. of good Repute gives us εἰς instead of ἐν. In all other places εἰς is constantly us'd after καταβαίνειν, as we have κατέβησαν εἰς ὕδωρ, *Acts viii. 38.* But if we read ἐλέετο ἐν τῇ κολυμβήθρᾳ, this expression is the same with those in *2 Kings v. 10, 12.* and elsewhere. Perhaps the peculiar Sense, which the word ἐλέετο has here, not being commonly known, the word κατέβαινε was put in the Margin of the Antient MSS. as one of the same sense, and more intelligible; and from the Margin it might creep into the Text of the less Accurate Copies of St. *John's* Gospel. But I offer this as Conjecture only.

deny'd, and by None (it is likely) more than by Himself: "A Fine Miracle!" he would cry; "don't many Medicinal Baths cure various kinds of Diseases, and multitudes of such as labour under each Disease, provided their Case be a Curable one?" It is probable that his Language then would have been of this Sort: "Had only One been cur'd, the First that bathed every Morning, or the First that could get in after some invisible Motion of the Water, then there would have been a Great and Real Miracle? but now the Numbers make the Fact suspicious: it seems to have been a Natural Quality in the Waters, because it is so Universal; to make it appear a Miracle, its Effects should have been Confin'd and Limited to particular Times and Persons, or be otherwise so circumstantiated, as that the Power of God, and not of Blind Nature, might have appear'd in it." I appeal to the Reader, whether from the Turn and Make of Mr. W.'s Genius one might not expect such Objections as These, if the Case had truly been what he seems to require it should be: and therefore who would quarrel with so Reasonable a Circumstance of the Story as This is?

By what has been said in the foregoing Account of this Miracle, the Reader is prepar'd to see the Captious Nature of some other Questions of this Author, viz. *How often did the Angel descend? How long before Christ's Advent, and why not since?* p. 41. For (as I have shew'd) it does not appear from any part of the Evangelist's Story, nor indeed from any other Good Authority, that this Sanative Virtue of the Pool ever happen'd before or after This *Feast* of the Passover: 'Till the Contrary be prov'd, let Mr. W. take for Answer, that it seems most probable, for the Reasons before given, that the *Pool of Bethesda* had this Miraculous Quality only at this Season, and that probably for several days together; whether it did operate above once in a Day, may as well be suppos'd as deny'd, because the Story is silent; all that we know being

being This, that whenever the *Water* was troubled, the Healing Quality took effect on the *First* that stepped in.

But *why not since*, is the Burthen of this Author's Question: Because Providence so order'd it: Is not that a sufficient Answer to your meer Question? Would he have us be *Wise above what is written*? and know the Reason of things for certain, when those Reasons are not assigned? — All that we can do, is to guess; and if any supposition, that we can make, be consistent with the Story, and be favour'd by other Parts of the Gospels, and at the same time be such as will effectually answer his Question, I hope that it will be allow'd me to offer such an one: tho' I am far from pretending to lay any Weight upon it, and therefore shall be less concern'd, if it should appear not to have any sufficient Foundation. It is but Conjecture, and as such only I offer the following Account to the Reader.

This Feast of the Passover was the second which was celebrated, and this was the second time so that Jesus was present at *Jerusalem*, after he had enter'd upon his Ministry and begun to work Miracles. When he came up the first time, he seems to have had a Design only to celebrate the Passover in obedience to the Law, for he retir'd from *Jerusalem* soon after it was finish'd; and tho' he wrought some Miracles there, yet we are not told whether they were of the Healing kind or not: We don't read that the *Scribes* or *Pharisees* were at that time enrag'd against him, and therefore his Departure from thence into *Galilee* may have been owing to his own Choice of not designing then to come and settle in the work of his Ministry at *Jerusalem*: But when he had gone preaching and healing Diseases thro' all the Cities of *Galilee*, and thro' most other parts of the Country of *Judea*, he came up at this second Passover to *Jerusalem*, probably with intent to fix his abode there, and shew that he was the Son of God by his Power over Devils

Devils and Diseases. What then if we should suppose that Providence (by giving to *the Pool of Bethesda* this healing Quality at or a little before the beginning of this *Feast*) might intend to shew the *Jews* that the Divine Power in *Jesus* was coming among them, and might mean the Miraculous Effect of this *Pool* for an Emblem only or Earnest of what *Jesus* was then preparing to do for them? We find that God did in other Instances prepare the way for *Christ*; the Prophecies of the *Old Testament* were given for this purpose, and *John* the Baptist was declar'd his *Fore-runner*. And why might not This Miracle be of the same Preparatory Nature with Them? I may add too, that this Conjecture seems the more Reasonable, when it is remembred that besides the Cure of this *Infirm Man*, *Jesus* healed another at this Passover, who had a wither'd Hand, and retir'd from the City, only because the Pharisees took Council against him how they might destroy him. Matt. xii. 14. which when he knew, he withdrew himself from them, ver. 15 but if they had not thus wickedly sought his Ruin, before his time of suffering was come, it may be gather'd from the Story as not Improbable, that he could have continued among them a long while, perhaps the whole time of his Ministry. I lay no Weight (as I said) upon all this: it is but Supposition and Conjecture drawn from some Circumstances which seem to favour it: but such as it is, it may suffice for an Answer to Mr. *W.*'s Question, *Why the healing Quality was imparted to the Pool at That time, and not since?* I think it may be said that the Answer is at least as Good as the Question.

When this Grave Questioner of Providence and its Vicegerents asks, *Why no better care was taken by Providence or the Civil Magistrate about the disposal of this Angelical favour, than to leave it to him that could first step in?* p. 42. He may know (if he will reflect a little) that Providence had done enough, and the Magistrate alone is concern'd in the Question: but if this Healing Power

Power in the *Pool* was a New thing (as I shew'd it most Probable) and such as had not happen'd many Days, how does Mr. *W.* know that the Magistrates were yet convinc'd of the Reality of the Miracle? Or if they were, is he sure that they thought it proper to limit to particular Persons the Benefit of a Miracle which God had visibly left at large? Or can he shew that the Magistrates, so much employ'd as they must have been at that busy Time of the Passover, had Leisure and Opportunity to make any Regulations about it?

What (says he) *did the Blind, and the Halt, the With-er'd and Paralyticks do there?* p. 45. By which he would intimate that their Condition put them out of all hope of ever being the *First* to *step in*: Perhaps so: But they might have Friends ready there to assist them. And then to what purpose is this Question? We find that the *Infirm* Man's complaint turns upon his wanting such Assistance, and therefore we may suppose that he saw others provided with it; and the more they were, the less likely was he to get time enough to the Water.

There is another Objection, which Mr. *W.* has made, p. 47. made in the proper sense of the word, for it is wholly owing to his own Genius for Criticism: What We translate, *A certain Man was there, who had an Infirmary thirty and eight Years*, he says should, more truly according to the Original, be translated thus, (a) *A certain Man was there thirty and eight Years, which*

(a) The Greek is, Ἦν δὲ τις ἀνθρώπου ἐκ τεικνοῦσας ἐτη ἔχων ἐν τῇ ἀδενείᾳ: which may literally be render'd thus, *There was a certain Man, who had passed (or been) thirty eight Years in an Infirmary*: But if we joyn (as Mr. *W.* does) the words τεικνοῦσας ἐτη with ἐκ, and suppose the Man to have been *there* so long, then ἔχων ἐν ἀδενείᾳ must be constru'd alone, and signify *having or being in an Infirmary*: But there is no Instance of such a Greek Phrase in all the New Testament. On the other hand, if we joyn τεικνοῦσας ἐτη with ἔχων ἐν τῇ ἀδενείᾳ, we have several Expressions of this Evangelist to parallel it, as in Ch. xii. 17. *he found him*

which had an Infirmary. This Translation must be allow'd to be *truly* an *Original* one; but all other Truth it wants, as the Reader will plainly see by the Note below; where it appears that Our Version is most Certainly a Right one, and His most Probably a Wrong, I mean as to Grammar and St. *John's* Idiom; for as to the Sense he declares that his Translation brings an Absurdity upon the Story, and for this reason alone it seems as if he chooses it. And yet upon no better a Foundation than such a poor piece of Criticism he falls out with the *Infirm* Man for waiting so long at the Pool, St. *John* is a *Romancer*, the *sick* Man is a *Fool*, and Mr. *W.* rails at His Patience, till he seems to lose all his Own.

I come now to the Last Objection (Mr. *W.* indeed has plac'd it in the Front) against the Truth of this Story, which is, that *Neither Josephus nor any other Jewish Writers have made mention of it*, p. 38.

Now whatever Weight their Silence may have against the supposition of such Miracle lasting among the *Jews* for any considerable Number of Years, yet it favours and strengthens my Supposition; for because no *Jewish* Writer mentions it, therefore it seems to have never happen'd but at this Feast: But perhaps he may expect a Reason, why, tho' it happen'd but once, this *Once* is pass'd over and unmention'd by all the *Jewish* Writers. If Mr. *W.* knows any thing of these matters, he might remember that the *Jews* who wrote in or about *Christ's* time are very few in Number, except the Authors of the New Testament, tho' his Expression *All* would insinuate that there was a great Plenty of them. The Writers of the two *Targums*, with *Philo* and *Josephus*, are *All*; the first of

him τέσσαρας ἡμέρας ἦδη ἔχοντα ἐν τῷ μνημείῳ, *having now been four days in the Grave.* And in the very next Verse to this which we are considering, it is said of this *Infirm* Man that *Jesus* knew *ὅτι πολὺν ἦδη χρόνον ἔχει*, *that he had now passed or been a long time in an Infirmary.* And therefore the common Translation is the only one which is *truly* according to the *Original*.

which

which wrote their *Paraphrases* on the Old Testament before this Miracle was vouchsafed to the *Pool*; *Philo* indeed and *Josephus* wrote after it; but *Philo* lived at a great distance from the Fact, as far as *Alexandria* in *Egypt*; and *Josephus* was not born 'till after this had happen'd. Is not here room then to suppose that a Miracle which lasted so few Days (as I have shew'd) might never have come to their Ears? Or if they had heard of it, might not they both have been in doubt, for want of knowing all its Circumstances, whether it was not a Natural Effect rather than a Divine one? Might not *Philo* particularly, who was jealous of the Honour of the *Jewish* Temple in *Egypt*, have look'd upon it as an Artifice of the *Jewish* Priests at *Jerusalem* to shew that God was visibly among them, and to argue from thence that he did not approve of any Temple erected to his Service elsewhere? But for *Josephus* we have not This to say; he was a Worshipper at the Temple in *Jerusalem*, he liv'd and was brought up there, and could not He have known the Truth of the Case? If Mr. *W.* should be dispos'd to ask this Question, I would remind him that *this* Great Historian was not so Fair a Dealer in some Instances, as might be expected. What he wrote, he wrote for the Information of the *Greeks* and Learned *Romans*, who were Heathens, and he seems all along in his Histories to be very tender of dwelling too much upon Miracles: he has omitted the mention of some, and has endeavour'd by Natural Causes to account for others of those very Miracles of *Moses*, which he undoubtedly did Believe and Teach too, as he was a *Jewish* Priest: The Case was, that he was afraid to make his History appear *Incredible* to his Readers, and therefore he softened some things which he was oblig'd to mention, and wholly omitted others which had no Publick Consequence: An Instance of this (among many others) we have in what he says of the Passage of the *Israelites* thro' the *Red-Sea*, that the

Fact might not seem (a) *incredible* (as he expresses himself), he puts in a Doubt, Whether the Parting of the Waters on that occasion was *caus'd by the Command of God, or by the Natural course of things*, and refers (as to a Parallel Event) to what befell *Alexander and his Army at the Pamphylian Sea*.

From one of this turn, is it to be expected that He should relate this Miracle at the *Pool*, so much less Remarkable than that of *Moses*? *Josephus's* silence therefore about this Story of the *Pool* is no more an Argument against it, than Mr. *W.*'s Outcries are: It may be True, tho' the One has said nothing concerning it, and notwithstanding all that the Other has said against it.

After all, let Mr. *W.* tell me, to what End and Purpose should St. *John* romance in this particular Story: Did this Miracle do any Honour to *Jesus*? Or had it any necessary Connexion with that which he wrought on the *Infirm Man*? If St. *John* had not known it to be True, or at least if the current Report of the *Jews* had not run this way, would he have mention'd it, when the Cure that his Master wrought was equally the same Miraculous one, whether this *Pool* had ever had such a Healing Quality or not? These Questions I leave with him, in return for the Many which he has ask'd about this Story; and I now call upon him to allow (as he says he will) St. *John's Word* to pass sooner than another Man's, if the Account was not loaded with Improbabilities, p. 39. I have taken the Load off from it, and therefore I hope that he will permit us to take the benefit of his Confession.

2. §. But it is time to come to the other Part of the Story, which we are more nearly interested in, I

(a) Θαυμάσει μιν εἰς τὸ λόγον ἀπίστων, εἰ ἀρχαίοις ἀνθρώποις εὐρέθη σωτηρίας ὁδὸς καὶ διὰ θαλάσσης, εἴτε καὶ βέλησιν Θεῷ, εἴτε κατ' αὐτόματον ὅποτε καὶ τοῖς περὶ Ἀλέξανδρον &c. Antiqu. Jud. l. 2. c. 16.

mean the Miraculous Cure which *Jesus* perform'd upon the *Man* who was there at the Pool, and had had an *Infirmity* for thirty and eight Years.

To this *Mr. W.* objects two things,

That *Jesus* by healing only One out of the great multitude of *Impotent Folk* at the Pool, shew'd either want of Power, or want of Mercy and Compassion, p. 49, 50. and

That, because we don't know what the *Man's Infirmity* was, there neither is, nor can be proved to be any thing supernatural in it, p. 34, 53.

To the First of these Objections it may be answer'd, that *Jesus*, who knew what was in *Man*, might know this *Infirm* *Man* to be the Fittest Object on account of his Good Disposition to receive and be thankful for such a Gracious Favour; or *Jesus* might consider him as more Helpless than the Rest, because (as the *Man* himself said) *he had no one, when the Water was troubled, to put him into the Pool*; or if neither of these two Reasons will satisfy *Mr. W.* that which *St. John* assigns should (one would think) be sufficient not only to answer his Question, but to have prevented it: for *St. John* ushers in the Account of this *Man's Cure* with saying, *Jesus knew that he had been now a long time in that Case*, ver. 6. His Distemper had continued on him for thirty eight Years; and was not that a Circumstance to move Compassion? Might not that justify the singling of him out of the Number, as the properest Object for Relief?

And how does it appear from hence, that there was any want of Power in *Jesus*? for surely by the same Power with which he healed One, if it was Miraculous, he might heal Many: all Cures are alike to a Divine Hand: Admit that *Jesus* wrought one, and you must admit that he could have wrought more, if he had pleas'd: when it is said that he *could do no mighty works at Nazareth*, Mark vi. 4. it is not meant that he had not Power to do them, as This Happy Commentator on the New Testament understands it (Disc.

2. p. 15.) but that *Jesus* did not or would not, because they, with whom he was, were not qualify'd with any Good Dispositions to make a right use of them. If Mr. *W.* should think this a Comment of my Own upon the Words, I could shew it to be *St. Matthew's*, ch. xiii. 58. and support it better than He ever did any Comment of his Own; for I could give him Proofs (and those as many as he shall call for) that *ἐκ δυνάμεως* must necessarily have this signification.

But Mr. *W.* is not so soon satisfy'd; for he goes on to say that *St. Matthew*, *St. Mark*, and *St. Luke* tell us such Stories of *Jesus's* healing Power, as would incline us to think that he cur'd all wherever he came, because he healed all manner of Diseases, p. 50. They may incline a heedless Reader of their Gospels to think so, or a Captious one may say this whether he thinks so or not: For if the Evangelists have said that *he healed all manner of Diseases*, does it follow from thence that they say *he heal'd all wherever he came*? if he cur'd some who were Blind at one time, the Lame at another, and so at different times cured the Diseas'd of every kind, or if he cur'd all sorts at any one time, this is enough to make good the Assertion; all that can be concluded from it is, that there was no sort of Disease which *Jesus* did not shew himself able to cure: And the Evangelists expressly tells us the very contrary to what this Author concludes; for Instance, *St. Mark* ch. vi. 4. says, that at *Nazareth* he could do no mighty works, *save that he laid his Hands upon a few sick Folk and healed them*; there were others therefore in the same condition whom he did not heal. The Evangelists (I grant) do often speak of *Jesus's* healing all manner of Diseases, as *St. Matt.* ch. xii. 15. says that *when the Multitude follow'd Jesus, he healed them All*; and ch. xiv. 14. that *when they followed him on foot out of the Cities into a Desert place, he was mov'd with Compassion toward them and healed them*. But should it not be consider'd that in both these Cases, those that were healed, were such as followed *Jesus*, and thereby manifested

nifested their Belief that he was come from God, and was therefore able to heal them? In this firm persuasion they left their habitations and *came to him*, as the Learned Bishop of *Litchfield* express'd himself, and thereby guarded his Assertion from that very Exception which Mr. *W.* has made to it: And was This the Case here, at the *Pool*? The great Multitude that was present at it, *Jesus* found there when he passed by; they *came not to him*, so far from it that they lay there in hopes of being cur'd by other means than *Jesus's* Power. What then? if some Evangelists say that *Jesus* healed all the sick that *followed* him, does St. *John* give a Contrary Account, when he tells us that at this *Pool* *Jesus* did *not* heal above one of those who did *not* follow him? What Trifling does Mr. *W.* put off with the Air of Argument!

His second Objection to this Miracle is, that *because we don't know what the Man's Infirmary was, there neither is, nor can be prov'd to be any thing supernatural in it.* On the contrary I undertake to shew that let the *Infirmary* have been of what sort soever he pleases, provided he allows it to have been a Distemper, there was a Miracle wrought in the Cure of it. The Original word *ἀδυνεία* is always in the Gospels us'd on these occasions, to signify a Disease or Distemper; and the Fathers generally thought this Man's to have been a *Palsy*; but we will take the lowest Sense of the Word, and suppose it was only a *Weakness in his Limbs*; yet consider that it was Weakness of thirty eight Years Continuance; and as it was a Confirm'd one, so it had prevail'd upon him to a Great degree, for he was forc'd to have his Bed or Chair brought along with him to the *Pool* side. Such was his deplorable condition, and yet upon *Jesus's* only saying to him, *Rise, take up thy Bed, and walk*, we are told that he was *immediately made whole and took up his Bed and walked.* The Cure, you see, was effected in a Moment, and was so Compleat an one, as that from being oblig'd to rest himself on his Bed, he was

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immediately able not only to walk, but to carry his Bed: And is there here no evident mark of a *Supernatural* Power in *Jesus*? No, says Mr. *W.* p. 53. for Instances may be given of Infirmities of a *long Duration*, which in time, and especially in Old Age wear off. How Old Age should be a Cure, I am not at leisure to enquire; but allowing it, what are such *Instances* to the purpose here? for this Man's *Infirmity* is not represented as *wearing off by time*, but as healed in a moment: and therefore Mr. *W.* contradicts the Evangelist, when he adds, *Who knows but this was the Case of the Impotent Man, whose Infirmity Jesus observing to be wearing off, bid him be gone, and take up his Couch, for he would soon be made whole?* Mr. *W.* may know that this was not the Case; for St. *John* tells him that the Man was *immediately made whole*.

Still Mr. *W.* has one Refuge; for he supposes that such Cures as these may be perform'd without a Divine Power, by the *Help of Imagination* only, pag. 35. This Topick he insists upon here, and elsewhere in his Discourses, and therefore I shall consider it distinctly. That there may in many Cases have been Cures of Chronical Diseases brought about by the help of a strong Imagination, this Author supposes; but without enquiring whether this Supposal of his has any Foundation, I will allow the Fact for Argument's sake, tho' it is much to be doubted, whether he can make good what he has advanced here: But however that be, yet this we may be Certain of, that in every Case which we have any credible Account of, there is one Circumstance which plainly distinguishes them from the miraculous Cures wrought by *Jesus*, viz. They were never effected at once, and in a Moment: But when Surprise, Joy, and a strong Faith that he should be cur'd, had so work'd upon the Patient, as to give a new Turn and Motion to his Spirits, and to the Juices of his Body, he has only begun from that Moment to find an Amendment; and the Impression of the same Passions remaining strong

strong upon him afterwards, he has recover'd by Degrees, and in Length of time the Cure has been completed, Nature helping to finish what the Imagination had imperfectly begun: This may be affirm'd to be the true Account of all those Chronical Diseases, such as the *King's Evil*, &c. which this Author supposes to have ever been cur'd by the *Help of Imagination*.

But it is Remarkable, that in this Miracle, which is before us, there is no room to suppose any Help from the *Imagination*; for the Infirm Man did not so much as know *Jesus*, even after he was healed; *he wist not who it was*, that had bid him *take up his Bed and walk*, as *St. John* assures us Verse 13. and when *Jesus* said to him at the Pool, *Wilt thou be made whole?* it is plain by his Answer (*Sir, I have no Man when the Water is troubled*, &c.) that he expected nothing less than to be heal'd by a Divine Power in *Jesus*. In this case then, how could *Imagination* contribute to his Cure? It all lay the other way, against *Jesus's* Power, and if it operated at all, would more naturally have prevented a Cure than forwarded it. Let us never then be told for the future, that this Infirm Man's Cure was owing to *Imagination*, when it appears, that he knew not who *Jesus* was, and was waiting for Relief from another Quarter, of which too he almost despair'd.

From what has been said, it may be concluded that the Cure wrought by *Jesus* upon the Infirm Man, *was and is prov'd to be a Supernatural one, whatever his Infirmary was*; and for this Conclusion, I have not only the Reasons before mention'd, but *Mr. W.'s* own Confession, Disc. 4. p. 9. where, in the *Blind Man's* Case, he allows that *if Jesus had us'd no Medicines, if with a Word of his Mouth, he had cured the Man, and he had Instantaneously recover'd, as the Word was spoken, here would have been a Real and Great Miracle, let the Blindness or Imperfection of the Man's Sight before be of*

what kind or degree soever. Every Circumstance, which he requires towards making a True Miracle in the Blind man's Case, is exactly found in this *Infirm Man's*; and therefore I hope that Mr. *W.* will be convinc'd, if not by what I have said, yet by what he himself has said, that the Literal Story of this Miracle shews it to be a *Real* and *Great* one.

II. Another Miracle of *Jesus*, which gives great Offence to Mr. *W.* on account of the Literal Story, is (a) his *Healing the Paralytick, who was let down thro' the Roof of the House where Jesus was at Capernaum.*

This Story he calls the *most Monstrously Absurd, Improbable and Incredible of any, according to the Letter*, p 51. This is His way of entering upon every Miracle, he describes every one as the Worst; but the Reader has already seen so much of his manner of handling Miracles, as not to be overborn with such a General Attack as This: What Mr. *W.* has to offer in proof of this Assertion, shall be fully consider'd, after I have laid before the Reader in one View the True Circumstances of the Story.

Jesus came to *Capernaum* (*Mark* ii. 1.) and entring into a House where he had been accusom'd to lodge, the People of the City hearing of it, gather'd together about the House in great Numbers, so that *there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the Door*, ver. 2. On this Occasion *Jesus* being within the House *preached the Word to them*: If he was in a Ground-Room, by the τὰ πρὸς τῷ Δύρῳ must be meant the *Porch* or *Vestibule* of the House; but if he was in an Upper-Room (which is more likely) these Words must be understood of the *Area*, or Court-

(a) Mr. *W.*'s Discourse 4. p. 51. The Story is recorded by St. *Matt.* ch. ix. St. *Mark* ch. ii. and St. *Luke* ch. v.

Yard, or Space between the Outer-Wall and the House it self: And in this Case it may be presum'd that he taught the Crowd from some Window of the Upper-Room, so as that those who were within the Room where he was, and those who were Below in the Yard might all at once hear his Doctrine. The Story being silent about the Floor in which *Jesus* was, we may choose that Supposition which most favours the Literal Account.

It is well known, both from the Sacred Writers and others, that the *Jewish* Houses (as they always are in the Eastern Countries) were built low, having seldom above Two Floors or Stories; and that the Tops of them (called *δώματα*) were not covered with sloping Roofs as Ours are, but were flat, and surrounded with Battlements breast high to prevent falling, as God himself had commanded, *Deut.* xxii. 8. Upon these flat Tops of their Houses the *Jews* us'd to walk in the Cool of the Day, as *David* did, *2 Sam.* xi. 2. or to sit at any Hour of the Day under a Tent or other Cover to serve them for a Shade; thus a Tent was pitch'd for *Abshalom* on the House-Top, *2 Sam.* xvi. 22. And it was not unusual with the *Jews* to perform Religious Worship there, for not only the *Jews* burnt Incense upon them to all the Host of Heaven, as *Jerem.* tells us, chap. xix. 13. but *St. Peter* is said in *Act.* x. 9. to have been praying upon the House-Top about the sixth Hour. And this Custom is farther confirm'd by the Command which our Saviour gave to his Disciples, *Matt.* x. 27. that what they heard in the Ear they should preach upon the House-Tops: Which Command seems to intimate too that the *Jewish* Houses were not commonly higher than Two Stories, for otherwise the House-Tops would have been too high for any to have preached from them so as to be heard.

And as their Houses were thus Low, and the Roofs of them Flat, so there was a Way from within the House out upon the Roof by a Pair of Stairs, at the

Top of which was (a) a Door which lay even with the Roof, but was lifted up upon occasion for a Passage out, and had no doubt some fastening to secure the House from Thieves.

Nor was This the only way up to the Roof, for on the Outside too of the House, the *Jews* had (as well (b) as other Nations) a fix'd Pair of Stairs or Ladder, by which they could ascend from the Ground to the Roof without entring into the House.

The former of these Assertions appears plainly from our Saviour's Advice to the *Jews*, when speaking of the Swiftneſs with which the General Destruction was to overtake their Nation, he ſays, *Mark* xiii. 15. *Let him that is on the Houſe-Top, not go down into the Houſe, neither enter therein to take any thing out of the Houſe.* And the latter Aſſertion may be fairly drawn from the ſame Words of our Saviour, becauſe the Advice ſuppoſes that there was another and a nearer way of deſcending from the Houſe-Top, which is not to be underſtood (we may be ſure) of venturing their Necks by throwing themſelves down from it; nor can it well be underſtood of any other than a Pair of Stairs or ſtanding Ladder plac'd on the Outſide of their Houſes.

This then being generally the Faſhion of the *Jewiſh* Houſes, was probably the Faſhion of That at *Caper-naum*: where, while *Jeſus* was preaching to the People, and while the Room where he ſtood was filled, and even the Space about the Door below was crowded with Hearers, a Man ſick of the *Palfy* was

(a) See *Lightfoot's* Quotations to this purpoſe out of the *Talmud*, where it is called *the Way of the Roof*.

(b) Among the *Greeks* too the ſame Cuſtom ſeems to have prevail'd; for in the *Pheniffe* of *Euripides*, *Antigone* goes out of the Houſe, and by a *κλίμαξ* made of *Cedar* mounts up to the Roof, as may be ſeen by comparing ver. 99, 100 and 201 together,

brought in a Couch, or (a) sort of Elbow Chair, by four Persons who carried him: And when his Bearers could not find a Way thro' the Crowd about the Door, because the Multitude was so Great and so very Attentive, they bethought themselves of going round the House, and getting at *Jesus* by another way; which was, to carry the Paralytick up the Stairs on the Outside of the House, and by that Method they brought him up upon the Roof: When they were got thus far, it seems that they found the Door (or *Way of the Roof*, as the *Jewish* Rabbins call it) shut and fasten'd, by which they had hoped to convey the sick Man down into the Room where *Jesus* was. To work then the Bearers go, and force open the Door of the Roof, which St. *Mark* expresses by ἀπεκάλυσαν τὴν στέγην, *they uncover'd the Roof*, i. e. (b) they open'd the Door, which lying Even with the Roof, was a Part of it, when it was let down and shut: And because they us'd Force in opening the Door, St. *Luke* speaks of them as (c) ἐξορύξαντες *breaking*

(a) St. *Mark* calls it κρῖββατος, and St. *Luke* κλινίδιον: so that these two words are synonymous. Now *Hesychius* explains the word σκιμπόδιον by εὐτελὲς κλινίδιον μοιοκοίτιον, from whence it may be remark'd that there were κλινίδια no larger than for One person only, and of a much smaller size than the word *Bed* conveys an Idea of to an *English* Reader. And this seems to be the Size of the *Bed* or *Chair* in this place; for tho' Four persons help'd to carry the Sick man in it, yet it was no larger than what He alone could carry, when he was heal'd by *Jesus*, as appears by the Story.

(b) That this is the Sense of St. *Mark's* words, appears from considering, that if the Door resembled the Trap-doors at the Top of some of our Houses, and if, when let down, it lay even with the Roof, it was properly a Part of the Roof; and of consequence the lifting or forcing it up was *uncovering the Roof*.

(c) This word ἐξορύξαντες is omitted in the *Camb. Greek MS.* and it is not express'd in the *Old Latin MS.* of the *Abby of Corbie*, nor indeed in the *Syr. Persic.* and *Æthiop.* Versions. But there is no need to suppose the *Greek* word not to be genuine; for we may understand by it, no more than *pulling*, or *forcing* the Door out of its Frame, without any digging, or using of Instruments for that purpose: The *Vulg.* has *parefacientes*, which comes to the same in effect with

ing it up, or rather pulling it out of the Frame. And having done this, they let down the Couch and the Sick Man upon it (probably two of them going first down to receive the Bed, and the other two letting it gently down into their Arms) which in St. Luke's Phrase is διὰ τῶν κεράμων καθήκαν, they let him down thro' the tiling, i. e. thro' the Roof, which, except where the Door was, was pav'd with (d) Tiles: By these means they brought the Paralytick into the Room, and found no difficult matter to place him in the midst before Jesus. Upon this Jesus seeing how great the Faith of this Man and his Bearers was, who had taken so much pains to get at him, was pleas'd, on this occasion, to heal the Paralytick in a Miraculous manner, as the Sequel of the Story assures us.

If this Account be a True, or at least a Probable one, as it seems to be both from the Account it self, and the Notes subjoyn'd to it, we may be able to give a satisfactory Answer to the Charge of Absurdities which Mr. W. has brought in such Plenty against the Literal Story.

He begins with asking, *What did the People so throng and press for? Was it (says he) to see Jesus work Miracles? then the People frustrated their own Expectations by not making way for the Paralytick.* But tho' the In-

with ἐξορύξαντες. and does not imply, that there was any digging us'd in the opening of it: but only that the Door was broken open, or pulled out, in which Sense St. Paul uses this very word, Gal. iv. 15. τὰς ὀφθαλμοὺς σου ἔξορύξαντες, pulling out your Eyes, i. e. by force, but not by digging, in the proper and strict meaning of the word. It may be observ'd too that the Couch or Chair not being a Large one (as we shew'd in the Note (a) p. 29) it might be let or carried down, with the sick man upon it, without widening the Passage, or making any Hole about it.

(d) Κέραμοι and τέγϑ, (or σέγϑ) are synonymous words in the Greek Authors, as Steph. in voce κέραμϑ informs us: who adds, Pollux tradit non suo tempore solum, κέραμον fuisse vocatum ipsum τέγϑ, sed Aristophanem quoque ita appellasse in Cocalo: And the same thing may be observ'd by comparing v. 1286. of Aristoph. Vespa together with the Note of the Ancient Scholiast upon it.

tent of some that crowded the Door might be to be healed by him, yet it is probable that the Greater part might have come to hear his *Doctrine* (with which St. *Luke* tells us, Ch. iv. 32. that they had been *astonished*, when *Jesus* was the last time among them); and they certainly who came on this Account did not *frustrate* their own Expectations in not giving way to this Paralytick: on the contrary, if they had retir'd to make room for him, then they would have furnish'd Mr. *W.* with more Ground for this Objection.

But he goes on, *Was it then to hear Jesus preach?* No (says he) for *Capernaum* was *Jesus's* own Country, and therefore he was without Honour there. The Fact is false, and therefore his Conclusion from it must be groundless; for *Capernaum* was not *Jesus's* own Country, but *Nazareth*, which the Evangelists justly call so, because he lived there for the best part of thirty years. How unhappy is this Author that he can never once deviate into Truth! It is said indeed by the Evangelists that *Jesus* had been twice at *Capernaum* before this time; but of his first time of going thither we read, that he *continued there not many days*, John ii. 12. When he went the second time, tho' St. *Matt.* ch. iv. 13. says that he *κατόκησεν* in *Capernaum*, yet from (d) St. *Mark's* account of the matter it seems as if *Jesus* staid there but one Day and one Night; if I should allow Mr. *W.* the most that he can possibly draw from it, yet his Abode there must have been but for a few Days; and with this Account St. *Matthew's* Word *κατόκησεν* well agrees, which may as well be render'd *he sojourn'd* or *houſed* there, as *he dwelt* there, as Leigh has shewn in his *Critica Sacra*. I confess that, tho' no Evangelist calls *Capernaum* *Jesus's* own Country, yet St. *Matt.* ix. 1. seems to mean this Place when he call it *Jesus's* own City: Here Mr. *W.*

(d) See *ch. i. v.* 21, 29, 32, and 35. compar'd together.

may think (if he pleases) that I yield up the Point, and grant him, tho' not the same, yet something Equivalent to what he asserted. But I would advise him not to triumph too soon, for I assure him that this Concession will never serve his purpose: Tho' *Jesus* had been but twice at *Capernaum* before this Time we are speaking of, and had staid there so little a while each time, yet after the Cure of this Paralytick, *Jesus* during the rest of his Life frequently went down to *Capernaum*, and made long Abodes there; he seems to have chosen it for the Ordinary place of his Residence, and therefore St. *Matthew* (who wrote his Gospel after the Death of *Jesus*) might properly enough call it *his own City*, tho' it had not a Right to that Name at the time when *Jesus* heal'd there the Man who was sick of the Palsy. So that if *Capernaum* was not *Jesus's own Country* in any Sense, nor *his own City* at that time when the People flock'd to hear him, the Proverb *that a Prophet is without honour in his own Country* is no Objection to this Circumstance of the Story. If the Evangelists may be believ'd, we find that the last time before this Appearance of *Jesus* in *Capernaum*, *all the City was gather'd together at the Door*, where he was, *Mark i. 33.* and *they were astonished at his Doctrine, for his word was with Power,* *Luke iv. 32.* If he left them then in such Amazement, it is no wonder that at this third time of his coming they flock'd about him in great Numbers.

But *why* (says Mr. *W.*) *had not the Paralytick and his Bearers the Patience to wait till the Crowd was dispersed?* The Man at the *Pool of Bethesda* had too much Patience, it seems, and This Man too little: Any thing will serve for an Objection, I perceive; But if this Paralytick and his Bearers had not Patience, to Mr. *W.*'s Size, what is that to the Miracle? And yet perhaps they were not so blameable for their Eagerness, as he imagines: For how could they know but that *Jesus* might leave the City as soon as he had done preaching, and before the Crowd was well dispersed?

If

If this was their Fear, it was no Unlikely one to happen; for when *Jesus* was last among them, the Crowd continued about his Door till *Night* (very probably till late at Night, as the Circumstances seem to shew) and he left the City *in the Morning a great while before Day*, Mark i. 35. And why might not his Departure be as Sudden now? Thus the Sick man and his Bearers might have reason'd; and if they did, they reason'd better than Mr. *W.* has done in any part of his Discourses, at least than he does in what follows.

If they could not (says he) *get to the Door of the House for the Press, of consequence they could not come at the Sides of it.* Some men have their peculiar ways of arguing, and this Mr. *W.* may call one of His, without fear of Envy. For where is the *Consequence*? If the Door was crowded, must that whole Side of the House be so too? Or if that Side was crowded, had the House no other Sides? Must it not have had Three others? And why will not he (in pity) allow One of them to have been Clear for the Paralytick to have come up to it? if the Crowd came to hear *Jesus* teach, it seems most probable that they were all got together on that Side only from whence he was teaching.

Well, but the Sick Man (says he p. 57.) *was hawl'd and heaved up to the Top of the House with Ropes and Ladders.* Here he doubts not but he has got hold of an Absurdity in the Literal Story; but he has no fast hold of it, as will appear; for there was no need of *hawling* or *heaving*, of *Ropes* or *Ladders* to be brought, if my Account of the *Jewish Houses* be a True, or even a Probable one. All that the Bearers had to do, was to carry the Sick man round about by some private way to that side of the House, where the Stairs or Ladder was, which led from the Ground to the House-Top: up these Stairs they carried him with no more trouble than they had been at to bring him down the Stairs of his own House.

Still Mr. *W.* is not satisfy'd, he has Absurdities in Store to charge the Literal Account with ; such as *uncovering the Roof, and breaking up Tiles, Spars and Rafter's ; and making a Hole capacious enough for the Man and his Bed to be let thro',* p. 57. *It was well (says he) if Jesus and his Disciples escap'd with only a Broken Pate, by the falling of the Tiles, and if the rest were not smother'd with Dust,* p. 58. But here Mr. *W.* raises a *Dust* without occasion ; for if there was (as I shew'd to be Probable) a Door on the Roof of the House which lay Flat and Even with the Roof, the Bearers had nothing to do but to force and pull it Open : and for this they might only draw some Nails, and take off the Hinges, or they might only break part of the Door or Door-Frame : All which might be done without raising any troublesome *Dust*, or breaking the *Pate* of any one below with the *Tiles*, even tho' we should suppose that this Door of the Roof was directly over the Room, where *Jesus* and his Disciples were : But why may not we suppose that the Stairs up to the Roof, and the Door at the Top of them were *Without* the Room, as they commonly are among Us ? If they were, what will become then of Mr. *W.*'s fancied Absurdity ? In this Case the raising of some Dust, and the falling of a few Tiles would fall short of all the mischief which he (it seems) is so very apprehensive of.

Mr. *W.* has (I perceive) look'd into some of our Commentators on this Chapter, and takes Notice that Dr. *Lightfoot* and Dr. *Whitby* have both maintain'd that the Roofs of the *Jewish* Houses were Flat, and had a Door in them, by which the *Jews* us'd to ascend to the Tops of their Houses, p. 58. But he doubts whether what these Learned Men have said comes up to the Case here, and is consistent with the several Expressions us'd by St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* on this occasion : That it is consistent, I have already shew'd ; and therefore I shall only take Notice of what he adds, *To indulge them in their Notion, I may ask them, What*

occasion was there then of widening the Door-way, and breaking down the Sides of it? p. 59. There was no occasion, I believe, nor is any mention made of the Bearers doing this; the word *ἑξουσίαν* (as I said before) necessarily implying no more than that they pull'd the Door open by force: and therefore if these be all the Objections which Mr. *W.* has to make against the Notions of those Learned Men, they may still pass for Able Commentators, in the Number of which Mr. *W.* will never be reckon'd.

All this while (says Mr. *W.* pag. 58.) *where was the Good Man of the House?* He was present, we may suppose; but if so little mischief was done by the Entrance made for the Sick man and his Bed, the Good man of the House had not all the Provocation; which the Question supposes: in Crowds and Throngs Men are content to bear some small Inconvenience: it is generally in vain for them to complain of a Mob, whose Eagerness is too great to be restrain'd by the Outcry of One man: and perhaps this Master of the House might be so attentive to *Jesus's* preaching that he might not perceive what was doing above at the Door, till it was done and the Entrance made; especially if the Door and the Stairs leading up to it were without the Room where *Jesus* and He were: or (it may be) he was Unwilling to disturb such heavenly *Doctrine* upon so slight an Occasion as the breaking Open a Door, by those, whose only Motive was to bring a Sick man before *Jesus* that he might be heal'd by a Miracle: or (for what Mr. *W.* knows to the contrary) he did call out to forbid their forcible Entrance into his House, tho' to no Purpose: These and many other Suppositions may be made, and any one of them (I think) is an Over-match for Mr. *W.'s* Question.

The last Demand which he has to make on this Head, is, *Why did not Jesus, to prevent this Trouble and Damage to the House, ascend thro' the Door-way to the Top of it, and there heal the Poor Man?* To which

Question he requires an Answer that *will consist with the Wisdom, the Goodness and Honour of Jesus*, pag. 60. But if the *Trouble* of the Bearers and the *Damage* done to the House was so small as I have represented it, no Objection can be form'd from hence to the Disadvantage of any of these Qualities in *Jesus*: For his healing the Paralytick was equally an Act of *Goodness*, whether he went up to the Man, or the Man was suffer'd to come down to Him: The Pains that the Sick man and his Bearers took to get at *Jesus*, shew'd the Strength of their Faith, and on that Account it was not Improper to permit them to shew how fit Objects they were of *Jesus's* Compassion. But I may ask this Author, if *Jesus* had gone up to the Top of the House, and to have wrought the Cure there, he would have had the Crowd follow him there too? if not, then the Miracle would have been wrought upon the Paralytick before a very few Witnesses: Whereas *Jesus* by suffering the Sick man and his Bed to be brought down into the Room, gave an Opportunity to all that were Present of seeing a *Real and Great* Miracle wrought: In this View then *Jesus* certainly did what was *consistent with his Wisdom and his Honour* too, for he thereby manifested his Glory, and made a greater Display of the Divine Power that was with him: Nor can it be doubted, but that if *Jesus* had taken the contrary method, and had gone up to the Roof, as Mr. *W.* expects he should have done, Mr. *W.* would have found a much greater Difficulty in that, and have ask'd with more colour of Reason, Why *Jesus* depriv'd so many of his Hearers of the Opportunity of seeing so stupendous a Miracle wrought; and probably he would have concluded, that his healing the Man not before the Company, but upon the House-top where only the Sick man's Friends were present, carry'd with it strong marks of Fraud and Imposture.

Upon the whole then of this Story, it appears to be so far from being *the most monstrously Absurd, Improbable*

ble and Incredible of any, according to the Letter (as he calls it, p. 51.) that I can find no one Absurdity in it, but what arises from his Misrepresentations of it.

In the same manner, in which I have consider'd these Two Miracles, I might proceed to consider the Rest: but I have not Leisure enough for the Work, and perhaps the Reader by this time may be satisfy'd with the Controversy: The Miracles, which I have singled out for Enquiry in This and the Preceding Parts, are such as I judg'd to have something of Difficulty in them, and not to have been sufficiently explain'd in all their Circumstances by our Ablest Commentators; who in so large an Undertaking, as Theirs commonly is, had neither Room nor Time to enter into the minuter Disquisitions. But I have examin'd every Particular of the Literal Account of those Miracles, and I can assure the Reader, that in all the Testimonies of Authors, which I have made use of, to support and confirm my Opinions, the Original has always been consulted, and no Trust has been given to Quotations at the second hand: I have seen enough to convince me, that Writers of Great Repute for Learning are not always to be depended upon in this Case, and therefore to the Fountain I went; for which reason, if at any time I quote Authors in a different manner, or a different Sense from what the Reader may have found them elsewhere quoted in, it is hoped that he will give me Credit so far as to take my Word, or refer himself to the Original for greater Certainty.

At present I have no Intention to pursue this Subject any farther; I would only request the Reader to consider two Things: The one, that the Reality of *Jesus's* Resurrection having been prov'd by uncontested Evidence, by all the Evidence that a Fact is capable of, nay, by such as no other Fact in Nature ever could receive, it requires no Stretch of Faith to believe, that he wrought other Miracles, which are

to all human Appearance of a less Difficult Nature; for to heal a Lame or a Blind man, or to raise a Dead man, has nothing so Inconceivable in it, as for a Man to raise Himself from the Dead: And if This be prov'd to have been done, the Other must be readily admitted for a Truth, whatever little Circumstances there may be in the Story, which an Ignorant Man may not understand, or a Perverse one may be able to misrepresent.

The other thing which I wou'd request the Reader to consider, is This; Mr. *W.* has set before him fifteen of the Miracles ascrib'd to *Jesus*, and by his Management of them has represented them as the most *Absurd*, *Improbable*, and *Incredible* Stories that ever were deliver'd. Now let the Reader take all of them in this one View; and consider whether it be in the least Probable, that such Authors as the Evangelists are (certainly neither downright Fools nor downright Madmen), in their Accounts of what they declare upon their own Knowledge and Eye-sight, could possibly be guilty of so many Absurdities as Mr. *W.* has charg'd their Narrations with. They either meant to write the Truth of Facts, or they did not: If the First; then we may ask, whence it happen'd that Men writing about what they saw, could fall into such Mistakes as Mr. *W.* supposes they did? But if they knowingly wrote falsehoods, it may be ask'd again; how it came to pass, that they, who intended to deceive, took no more care to secure their Credit, and make their Account Probable? Deceivers (one would naturally think) should contrive to make their Story hang together, and should mention no Circumstances but what they know to be consistent with the Customs and Manners of those, who were concern'd in it. The ordinary way to detect Men of this Character, is to find out that their Contemporaries, who might be as well acquainted with the Facts mention'd as Themselves, have given Accounts, either Inconsistent or Contradictory: But he must be a wretched Impostor indeed,

indeed, whose Story confutes it self, as Mr. *W.* thinks those of the Evangelists do: To suppose this, is to suppose them the very Weakest of Writers and of Men too. And how far they deserve that Character, must be left to the Judgment of every Impartial Reader of their Writings. We see then that Mr. *W.* overthrows all Probability on his Side of the Question, by endeavouring to prove too much: he allows nothing to be Right, all is *Falsehood*, all is *Absurdity*; and yet there can be no greater *Absurdity* in Nature (I think) than in believing, that Men of Sense, who intended to Deceive, took no more pains to give a Colour to their Story, but left it Open and expos'd to all the Objections which the Pen of Mr. *W.* has made against them.

This I mention as a strong Presumption against what he has advanc'd: But when it is farther consider'd what Answers I and others have given to his suppos'd *Absurdities*, I hope that every Unprejudic'd Infidel will give a Fair hearing; and that every Serious Christian will be the better confirm'd in his Belief, that *the Literal Account of all the Miracles of Jesus is True*, and that they are a Demonstration, that *the Power of God was with Him.*

F I N I S.



✓
T R Y A L

OF THE

W I T N E S S E S

OF THE

Resurrection of *Jesus*.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

N. B. *Not only Mr. Woolston's Objections in his Sixth Discourse, but those also which he and others have published in other Books, are here considered.*

Thomas ✓ Sherlock



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ROBERTS, near the *Oxford-Arms*
in *Warwick-Lane*. MDCCLXXIX.



THE
T R Y A L
O F T H E

*Witnesses of the Resurrection
of J E S U S.*



WE were, not long since, some Gentlemen of the Inns of Court, together, each to other so well known, that no Man's Presence was a Confinement to any other from speaking his Mind on any Subject that happened to arise in Conversation. The Meeting was without Design, and the Discourse, as in like Cases, various. Among other Things we fell upon the Subject of *Woolston's* Tryal and Conviction, which had happened some few Days before: That led to a Debate how the Law stands in such Cases, what Punishment it inflicts; and, in general, whether the Law ought at all to interpose in Controversies of this kind. We were not agreed in these Points. One, who maintain'd the favourable side to *Woolston*, discovered a great Liking and Approbation of his Discourses against the Miracles of Christ, and seemed to think his

Arguments unanswerable. To which another replied, I wonder that one of your Abilities, and bred to the Profession of the Law, which teaches us to consider the Nature of Evidence, and its proper Weight, can be of that Opinion; I am sure you wou'd be unwilling to determine a Property of Five Shillings upon such Evidence, as you now think material enough to overthrow the Miracles of Christ.

It may easily be imagined that this opened a Door to much Dispute, and determined the Conversation for the Remainder of the Evening to this Subject. The Dispute ran thro' almost all the Particulars mentioned in *Woolston's* Pieces; but the Thread of it was broken by several Digressions, and the Pursuit of Things which were brought accidentally into the Discourse. At length one of the Company said pleasantly, Gentlemen, you don't argue like Lawyers; if I were Judge in this Cause, I would hold you better to the Point. The Company took the Hint, and cry'd they shou'd be glad to have the Cause re-heard, and him to be the Judge. The Gentlemen who had engaged with Mettle and Spirit in a Dispute which arose accidentally, seem'd very unwilling to be drawn into a formal Controversy; and especially the Gentleman who argued against *Woolston*, thought the Matter grew too serious for him, and excused himself from undertaking a Controversy in Religion, of all others the most momentous: But he was told, that the Argument should be confined merely to the Nature of the Evidence, and that might be considered without entring into any such Controversy

as he wou'd avoid; and to bring the Matter within Bounds, and under one View, the Evidence of Christ's Resurrection, and the Exceptions taken to it, should be the only Subject of the Conference. With much Persuasion he suffered himself to be persuaded, and promised to give the Company, and their new-made Judge, a Meeting that Day fortnight. The Judge and the rest of the Company were for bringing on the Cause a Week sooner; but the Council for *Woolston* took the Matter up, and said, Consider, Sir, the Gentleman is not to argue out of *Littleton*, *Plowden*, or *Coke*, Authors to him well known; but he must have his Authorities from *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*; and a Fortnight is time little enough of all conscience to gain a Familiarity with a new Acquaintance; and, turning to the Gentleman, he said, I'll call upon you before the Fortnight is out, to see how reverend an Appearance you make behind *Hammond* on the New Testament, a Concordance on one hand, and a Folio Bible with References on the other. You shall be welcome, Sir, reply'd the Gentleman, and perhaps you may find some Company more to your own Taste; he is but a poor Council who studies on one side of the Question only, and therefore I will have your Friend *Woolston*, *T—l*, and *C—s*, to entertain you when you do me the Favour of the Visit. Upon this we parted in good Humour, and all pleased with the Appointment made, except the two Gentlemen who were to provide the Entertainment.

The SECOND DAY.

THE Company met at the Time appointed : But it happened in this, as in like Cases it often does, that some Friends to some of the Company, who were not of the Party the first Day, had got Notice of the Meeting; and the Gentlemen who were to debate the Question, found they had a more numerous Audience than they expected or desired. He especially who was to maintain the Evidence of the Resurrection, began to excuse the Necessity he was under of disappointing their Expectation, alledging that he was not prepared; and he had persisted in excusing himself, but that the Strangers, who perceived what the Case was, offered to withdraw, which the Gentleman would by no means consent to: They insisting to go, he said, he would much rather submit himself to their Candor, unprepared as he was, than be guilty of so much Rudeness, as to force them to leave the Company. Upon which one of the Company, smiling, said, It happens luckily that our Number is increased; when we were last together, we appointed a Judge, but we quite forgot a Jury, and now, I think, we are good Men and true, sufficient to make one. This Thought was pursued in several Allusions to legal Proceedings, which created some Mirth, and had this good Effect, that it dispersed the solemn Air which the mutual Compliments upon the Difficulty before-mentioned had introduced, and restored the Ease and Good-Humour natural to the Conversation of Gentlemen.

The

The Judge perceiving the Disposition of the Company, thought it a proper Time to begin, and called out, Gentlemen of the Jury take your Places; and immediately seated himself at the upper End of the Table: The Company sat round him, and the Judge called upon the Council for *Woolston* to begin.

Mr. A. Council for Woolston, addressing himself to the Judge, said,

May it please your Lordship; I conceive the Gentleman on the other Side ought to begin, and lay his Evidence, which he intends to maintain, before the Court; till that is done, it is to no purpose for me to object. I may perhaps object to something which he will not admit to be any part of his Evidence, and therefore, I apprehend, the Evidence ought in the first Place to be distinctly stated.

Judge. Mr. B. What say you to that?

Mr B. Council on the other Side:

My Lord, If the Evidence I am to maintain, were to support any new Claim, if I were to gain any thing which I am not already possessed of, the Gentleman would be in the right; but the Evidence is old, and is Matter of Record, and I have been long in possession of all that I claim under it. If the Gentleman has any thing to say to dispossess me, let him produce it; otherwise I have no reason to bring my own Title into question. And this I take to be the known Method of proceeding in such Cases; no Man is obliged to produce his Title to his Possession; it is sufficient if he maintains it when it is called in question.

Mr. A.

Mr. *A.* Surely, my Lord, the Gentleman mistakes the Case; I can never admit my self to be out of Possession of my Understanding and Reason; and since he would put me out of this Possession, and compel me to admit Things incredible, in virtue of the Evidence he maintains, he ought to set forth his Claim, or leave the World to be directed by common Sense.

Judge. Sir, you say right; upon Supposition that the Truth of the Christian Religion were the Point in Judgment. In that Case it would be necessary to produce the Evidence for the Christian Religion; but the Matter now before the Court is, Whether the Objections produced by Mr. *Woolston*, are of weight to overthrow the Evidence of Christ's Resurrection. You see then the Evidence of the Resurrection is supposed to be what it is on both Sides, and the Thing immediately in Judgment, is the Value of the Objections, and therefore they must be set forth. The Court will be bound to take notice of the Evidence, which is admitted as a Fact on both Parts. Go on Mr. *A.*

Mr. *A.* My Lord, I submit to the Direction of the Court. I cannot but observe that the Gentleman on the other side, unwilling as he seems to be to state his Evidence, did not forget to lay in his Claim to Prescription, which is, perhaps, in Truth, tho' he has too much Skill to own it, the very Strength of his Cause. I do allow that the Gentleman maintains nothing but what his Father and Grandfather, and his Ancestors, beyond time of Man's Memory, maintain'd before him: I allow too, that Prescription in many Cases makes a good Title;

Title; but it must always be with this Condition, that the thing is capable of being prescribed for: And I insist, that Prescription cannot run against Reason and Common Sense. Customs may be pleaded by Prescription; but if upon shewing the Custom, any thing unreasonable appears in it, the Prescription fails; for Length of Time works nothing towards the establishing any thing that cou'd never have a Legal Commencement. And if this Objection will overthrow all Prescriptions for Customs; the Mischief of which extends perhaps to one poor Village only, and affects them in no greater a Concern, than their Right of Common upon a ragged Mountain; shall it not much more prevail, when the Interest of Mankind is concern'd, and in no less a Point than his Happiness in this Life, and in all his Hopes for Futurity? Besides, if Prescription must be allowed in this Case, how will you deal with it in others? What will you say to the Ancient *Persians*, and their Fire-Altars? Nay, what to the *Turks*, who have been long enough in Possession of their Faith to plead——

Mr. B. I beg Pardon for interrupting the Gentleman. But it is to save him Trouble. He is going into his favourite Common-Place, and has brought us from *Persia* to *Turkey* already; and if he goes on, I know we must follow him round the Globe. To save us from this long Journey, I'll wave all Advantage from the Antiquity of the Resurrection, and the general Reception the Belief of it has found in the World; and am content to consider it as a Fact which happened but last

Year, and was never heard of either by the Gentleman's Grandfather, or by mine.

Mr. *A.* I should not have taken quite so long a Journey as the Gentleman imagines, nor, indeed, need any Man go far from home to find Instances to the Purpose I was upon. But since this Advantage is quitted, I am as willing to spare my Pains, as the Gentleman is desirous that I should. And yet I suspect some Art even in this Concession, fair and candid as it seems to be. For I am persuaded that one Reason, perhaps the main Reason, why Men believe this History of Jesus, is, that they cannot conceive that any one should attempt, much less succeed in such an Attempt as this, upon the Foundation of meer human Cunning and Policy; and 'tis worth the while to go round the Globe, as the Gentleman express'd himself, to see various Instances of the like Kind, in order to remove this Prejudice. But I stand corrected, and will go directly to the Point now in Judgment.

Mr. *B.* My Lord, The Gentleman in Justification of his first Argument, has entred upon another of a very different Kind. I think he is sensible of it, and seeming to yield up one of his popular Topicks, is indeed, artfully getting rid of another; which has made a very good Figure in many late Writings, but will not bear in any Place, where he who maintains it may be asked Questions. The mere Antiquity of the Resurrection I gave up; for if the Evidence was not good at first, it can't be good now. The Gentleman is willing, he says, to spare us his History of Ancient Errors, and intimates, that upon this account he passes

over many Instances of Fraud, that were like in Circumstances to the Case before us. By no means, my Lord, let them be passed over. I wou'd not have the main Strength of his Cause betrayed in Complaisance to me. Nothing can be more material, than to shew a Fraud of this Kind, that prevailed universally in the World. Christ Jesus declared himself a Prophet, and put the Proof of his Mission on this; that he should dye openly and publickly, and rise again the third Day. This surely was the hardest Plot in the World to be managed: And if there be one Instance of this Kind, or in any degree like it, by all means let it be produced.

Mr. *A.* My Lord, There has hardly been an Instance of a false Religion in the World, but it has also afforded a like Instance to this before us. Have they not all pretended to Inspiration? Upon what Foot did *Pythagoras*, *Numa*, and others set up? did they not all converse with the Gods, and pretend to deliver Oracles?

Mr. *B.* This only shews that Revelation is by the common Consent of Mankind, the very best Foundation of Religion, and therefore every Impostor pretends to it. But is a Man's hiding himself in a Cave for some Years, and then coming out into the World, to be compared to a Man's dying and rising to Life again? So far from it, that you and I and every Man may do the one, but no Man can do the other.

Mr. *A.* Sir, I suppose it will be allowed to be as great a thing to go to Heaven and converse with Angels, and with God, and to come down to the

Earth again, as it is to dye and rise again. Now this very thing *Mahomet* pretended to do, and all his Disciples believe it. Can you deny this Fact?

Mr. B. Deny it, Sir? No. But tell us who went with *Mahomet*? who were his Witnesses? I expect before we have done, to hear of the Guards set over the Sepulchre of Christ, and the Seal of the Stone: What Guard watched *Mahomet* in his going or returning? What Seals and Credentials had he? He himself pretends to none. His Followers pretend to nothing but his own Word. We are now to consider the Evidence of Christ's Resurrection, and you think to parallel it by producing a Case, for which no one ever pretended there was any Evidence. You have *Mahomet's* Word; and no Man ever told a Lye, but you had *his* Word for the Truth of what he said; and therefore you need not go round the Globe to find such Instances as these. But this Story, 'tis said, has gained great Credit, and is receiv'd by many Nations: Very well: And how was it receiv'd? Was not every Man converted to this Faith with the Sword at his Throat? In our Case, every Witness to the Resurrection, and every Believer of it was hourly exposed to Death: In the other Case, whoever refused to believe, died, or what was as bad, lived a wretched conquered Slave: And will you pretend these Cases to be alike? One Case indeed there was within our own Memory, which in some Circumstances came near to the Case now before us. The *French* Prophets put the Credit of their Mission upon the Resurrection of Dr. *Emmes*, and gave publick Notice of it. If the Gentleman pleases
to

to make use of this Instance, it is at his Service.

Mr. *A.* The Instance of Dr. *Emmes* is so far to the Purpose, that it shews to what Lengths Enthusiasm will carry Men. And why might not the same thing happen at *Jerusalem*, which happen'd but a few Years ago in our own Country? *Matthew*, and *John*, and the rest of them, manag'd that Affair with more Dexterity than the *French* Prophets; so that the Resurrection of Jesus gained Credit in the World, and the *French* Prophets sunk under their ridiculous Pretensions. That's all the Difference.

Mr. *B.* Is it so? And a very wide Difference, I promise you. In one Case, every thing happen'd that was proper to convince the World of the Truth of the Resurrection; in the other, the Event manifested the Cheat; and upon the View of these Circumstances, you think it sufficient to say, with great Coolness, That's all the Difference. Why, what Difference do you expect between Truth and Falshood? What Distinction——

Judge. Gentlemen, you forget that you are in a Court, and are falling into Dialogue. Courts don't allow of Chit-chat. Look ye, the Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus is before the Court, recorded by *Matthew*, *Mark*, and others. You must take it as it is; you can neither make it better nor worse. These Witnesses are accused of giving false Evidence. Come to the Point; and let us hear what you have to offer, to prove the Accusation.

Mr. B. Is it your Meaning, Sir, that the Objections should be stated and argued all together, and that the Answer should be to the whole at once? Or would you have the Objections argued singly, and answered separately by themselves?

Judge. I think this Court may dispense with the strict Forms of legal Proceedings, and therefore I leave this to the Choice of the Jury.

After the Jury had consulted together, the Foreman rose up.

The Foreman of the Jury. We desire to hear the Objections argued and answered separately. We shall be better able to form a Judgment by hearing the Answer, while the Objection is fresh in our Minds.

Judge. Gentlemen, You hear the Opinion of the Jury. Go on.

Mr. A. I am now to disclose to you a Scene, of all others the most surprizing. * “The Resurrection has been long talked of, and to the Amazement of every one who can think freely, has been believed thro’ all Ages of the Church.” This general and constant Belief creates in most Minds a Presumption that it was founded on good Evidence. In other Cases the Evidence supports the Credit of the History; but here the Evidence itself is presum’d only upon the Credit which the Story has gain’d. † I wish the Books dispersed

* *Sixth Discourse*, p. 17.

† *Ibid.* p. 4.

against Jesus by the ancient *Jews* had not been lost; for they would have given us a clear Insight into this Contrivance. But 'tis happy for us, that the very Account given by the pretended Witnesses of this Fact is sufficient to destroy the Credit of it.

The Resurrection was not a thing contrived for its own Sake. No! It was undertaken to support great Views, and for the Sake of great Consequences that were to attend it. It will be necessary therefore to lay before you those Views, that you may the better judge of this Part of the Contrivance, when you have the whole Scene before you.

The *Jews* were a weak superstitious People, and, as is common among such People, gave great Credit to some traditionary Prophecies about their own Country. They had besides, some old Books among 'em, which they esteemed to be Writings of certain Prophets, who had formerly lived among them, and whose Memory they had in great Veneration. From such old Books and Traditions they formed many extravagant Expectations; and among the rest one was, That some time or other a great victorious Prince should rise among them, and subdue all their Enemies, and make 'em Lords of the World. * In *Augustus's* Time they were in a low State, reduced under the *Roman* Yoke; and as they never wanted a Deliverer more, so the Eagerness of this Hope, as it happens to weak Minds, turned into a firm Expectation that he would soon come. This proved a Temptation to some bold,

* See *Scheme of Literal Prophecy*, p. 26.

and to some cunning Men, to personate the Prince so much expected; and * “ nothing is more natural and common to promote Rebellions, than to ground them on new Prophecies, or new Interpretations of old ones: Prophecies being suited to the vulgar Superstition, and operating with the Force of Religion. ” Accordingly many such Impostors rose, pretending to be the victorious Prince expected; and they and the People who followed them perished in the Folly of their Attempt.

But Jesus, knowing that Victories and Triumphs are not things to be counterfeited; that the People were not to be delivered from the *Roman* Yoke by Sleight of hand; and having no Hope of being able to cope with the Emperor of *Rome* in good earnest, took another and more successful Method to carry on his Design. He took upon him to be the Prince foretold in the ancient Prophets; but then he insisted that the true Sense of the Prophecies had been mistaken; that they related not to the Kingdoms of this World, but to the Kingdom of Heaven; that the Messiah was not to be a conquering Prince, but a suffering one; that he was not to come with Horses of War, and Chariots of War, but was to be meek and lowly, and riding on an Ass. By this means he got the common and necessary Foundation for a new Revelation, which is to be built and founded on a precedent Revelation. †

* *Scheme of Literal Prophecy*, p. 27.

† See *Discourse of the Grounds*, &c. Ch. iv.

To carry on this Design, he made choice of Twelve Men of no Fortunes or Education, and of such Understandings as gave no Jealousy that they would discover the Plot. And what is most wonderful, and shews their Ability; whilst the Master was preaching the Kingdom of Heaven, these poor Men, not weaned from the Prejudices of their Country, expected every Day that he would declare himself a King, and were quarrelling who should be his first Minister. This Expectation had a good Effect on the Service, for it kept them constant to their Master.

I must observe farther, that the *Jews* were under strange Apprehensions of supernatural Powers; and as their own Religion was founded on the Belief of certain Miracles, said to be wrought by their Lawgiver *Moses*; so were they ever running after Wonders and Miracles, and ready to take up with any Stories of this Kind. Now as something extraordinary was necessary to support the Pretensions of Jesus, he dextrously laid hold on this Weakness of the People; and set up to be a Wonder-Worker. His Disciples were well qualified to receive this Impression; they saw, or thought they saw, many strange things, and were able to spread the Fame and Report of them abroad.

This Conduct had the desired Success. The whole Country was alarmed, and full of the News of a great Prophet's being come among them. They were too full of their own Imagination, to attend to the Notion of a Kingdom of Heaven: Here was one mighty in Deed and in Word; and they concluded, he was the very Prince their Na-

tion expected. Accordingly they once attempted to set him up for a King; and at another time attended him in Triumph to *Jerusalem*. This natural Consequence opens the natural Design of the Attempt. If things had gone on successfully to the End, 'tis probable the Kingdom of Heaven would have been changed into a Kingdom of this World. The Design indeed failed, by the Impatience and Over-hastiness of the Multitude, which alarmed not only the Chief of the *Jews*, but the *Roman* Governor also.

The Case being come to this Point, and Jesus seeing that he could not escape being put to Death; he declared, that the ancient Prophets had foretold that the *Messias* should dye upon a Cross, and that he should rise again on the third Day. Here was the Foundation laid for the continuing this Plot; which otherwise had died with its Author. This was his Legacy to his Followers; which having been well managed by them and their Successors, has at last produced a Kingdom indeed; a Kingdom of Priests, who have governed the World for many Ages, and have been strong enough to set Kings and Emperors at Defiance. But so it happens, the ancient Prophets appealed to are still extant; and there being no such Prophecies of the Death and Resurrection of the *Messias*, they are a standing Evidence against this Story. As he expected, so it happen'd, that he died on a Cross. And the prosecuting of this Contrivance was left to the Management of his Disciples and Followers. Their Part is next to be consider'd —

Mr. B. My Lord, Since it is your Opinion that the Objections should be considered singly, and the Gentleman has carried his Scheme down to the Death of Christ, I think he is come to a proper Rest; and that it is agreeable to your Intention, that I should be admitted to answer.

Judge. You say right, Sir. Let us hear what you answer to this Charge.

Mr. B. My Lord, I was unwilling to disturb the Gentleman by breaking in upon his Scheme; otherwise I should have reminded him, that this Court sits to examine Evidence, and not to be entertained with fine Imaginations. You have had a Scheme laid before you, but not one bit of Evidence to support any Part of it; no, not so much as a Pretence to any Evidence. The Gentleman, I remember, was very sorry that the old Books of the *Jews* were lost, which would, as he supposes, have set forth all this Matter; and I agree with him, that he has much Reason to be sorry, considering his great Scarcity of Proof. And since I have mention'd this, that I may not be to return to it again, I would ask the Gentleman now, How he knows there ever were such Books? And since if ever there were any, they are lost, How he knows what they contained? I doubt I shall have frequent Occasion to ask such Questions. It wou'd indeed be a sufficient Answer to the whole, to repeat the several Suppositions that have been made, and to call for the Evidence upon which they stand. This would plainly discover every Part of the Story to be mere Fiction. But since the Gentleman seems to have endeavour'd to bring

under one View, the many Insinuations which have of late been spread abroad by different Hands, and to work the whole into a consistent Scheme; I will, if your Patience shall permit, examine this Plot, and see to whom the Honour of the Contrivance belongs.

The Gentleman begins with expressing his “Amazement, that the Resurrection has been believed in all Ages of the Church.” If you ask him, Why? he must answer, Because the Account of it is a Forgery: For ’tis no Amazement to him surely, that a true Account should be generally well received. So that this Remark proceeds indeed from Confidence rather than Amazement; and comes only to this, that he is sure there was no Resurrection: And I am sure this is no Evidence that there was none. Whether he is mistaken in his Confidence, or I in mine, the Court must judge.

The Gentleman’s Observation, That the general Belief of the Resurrection creates a Presumption that it stands upon good Evidence, and therefore People look no farther, but follow their Fathers, as their Fathers did their Grandfathers before them, is in great measure true; but it is a Truth nothing to his Purpose. He allows that the Resurrection has been believed in all Ages of the Church; that is, from the very Time of the Resurrection: What then prevailed with those who first receiv’d it? They certainly did not follow the Example of their Fathers. Here then is the Point, How did this Fact gain Credit in the World at first? Credit it has gained, without doubt.

doubt. If the Multitude at present go into this Belief thro' Prejudice, Example, and for Company sake, they do in this Case no more, nor otherwise, than they do in all Cases. And it cannot be denied, but that Truth may be receiv'd thro' Prejudice (as it is call'd) *i. e.* without examining the Proof or Merits of the Cause, as well as Falshood. What general Truth is there, the Merits of which all the World, or the hundredth Part, has examin'd? It is smartly said somewhere, *That the Priest only continues what the Nurse began*: But the Life of the Remark consists in the Quaintness of the Antithesis between the *Nurse* and the *Priest*; and owes its Support much more to Sound than to Sense. For is it possible that Children should not hear something of the common and popular Opinions of their Country, whether those Opinions be true or false? Do they not learn the common Maxims of Reason this way? Perhaps every Man first learnt from his Nurse, that two and two make four; and whenever she divides an Apple among her Children, she instils into them this Prejudice, That the Whole is equal to its Parts, and all the Parts equal to the Whole; and yet Sir *Isaac Newton*, (shame on him) what Work has he made, what a Building has he erected upon the Foundation of this Nursery-Learning? As to Religion, there never was a Religion, there never will be one, whether true or false, publickly owned in any Country, but Children have heard, and ever will hear, more or less of it from those who are placed about them. And if this is, and ever must be the Case, whether the Religion be true or false;

'tis

'tis highly absurd to lay Stress on this Observation, when the Question is about the Truth of any Religion; for the Observation is indifferent to both sides of the Question.

We are now, I think, got thro' the Common-place Learning, which must for ever, it seems, attend upon Questions of this Nature; and are coming to the very Merits of the Cause.

And here, the Gentleman on the other side thought proper to begin with an Account of the People of the *Jews*: The People in whose Country the Fact is laid, and who were originally, and in some respects principally concerned in its Consequences.

They were, he says, a weak superstitious People, and lived under the Influence of certain pretended Prophecies and Predictions; that upon this Ground they had, sometime before the Appearance of Christ Jesus, conceived great Expectations of the coming of a victorious Prince, who should deliver them from the *Roman* Yoke, and make them all Kings and Princes. He goes on then to observe, how liable the People were, in this State of Things, to be imposed on, and led into Rebellion, by any one who was bold enough to take upon him to personate the Prince expected. He observes further, that in Fact many such Impostors did arise, and deceived Multitudes to their Ruin and Destruction.

I have laid these things together, because I do not intend to dispute these Matters with the Gentleman. Whether the *Jews* were a weak and superstitious People, and influenc'd by false Prophecies, or whether they had true Prophecies
among

among them, is not material to the present Question. It is enough for the Gentleman's Argument, if I allow the Fact to be as he has stated it; that they did expect a victorious Prince, that they were upon this Account exposed to be practised on by Pretenders; and in Fact were often so deluded.

This Foundation being laid, it was natural to expect, and I believe your Lordship, and every one present did expect, that the Gentleman would go on to shew, that Jesus laid hold of this Opportunity, struck in with the Opinion of the People, and profess'd himself to be the Prince who was to work their Deliverance. But so far, it seems, is this from being the Case, that the Charge upon Jesus is, that he took the contrary Part, and set up in Opposition to all the popular Notions and Prejudices of his Country: That he interpreted the Prophecies to another Sense and Meaning than his Countrymen did; and by his Expositions took away all Hopes of their ever seeing the victorious Deliverer so much wanted and expected.

I know not how to bring the Gentleman's Premises and his Conclusion to any Agreement; they seem to be at a great variance at present. If it be the likeliest Method for an Impostor to succeed, to build on the popular Opinions, Prejudices and Prophecies of the People; then surely an Impostor cannot possibly take a worse Method than to set up in Opposition to all the Prejudices and Prophecies of the Country. Where was the Art and Cunning then of taking this Method? Cou'd any thing be expected from it, but Hatred, Contempt,

and Persecution? And did Christ in Fact meet with any other Treatment from the *Jews*? And yet when he found, as the Gentleman allows he did, that he must perish in this Attempt, did he change his Note? Did he come about, and drop any Intimations agreeable to the Notions of the People? It is not pretended. This, which in any other Case, which ever happened, would be taken to be a plain Mark of great Honesty, or great Stupidity, or of both, is in the present Case, Art, Policy, and Contrivance.

But it seems, Jesus dared not set up to be the victorious Prince expected, for Victories are not to be counterfeited. I hope it was no Crime in him that he did not assume this false Character, and try to abuse the Credulity of the People: If he had done so, it certainly wou'd have been a Crime; and therefore in this Point at least he is innocent. I do not suppose, the Gentleman imagines that the *Jews* were well founded in their Expectation of a Temporal Prince; and therefore when Christ opposed this Conceit at the manifest hazard of his Life; as he certainly had Truth on his side, so the Presumption is, that it was for the sake of Truth that he exposed himself.

No; he wanted, we are told, the *Common* and *Necessary* Foundation for a new Revelation, the Authority of an old one, to build on. Very well; I will not enquire how common or how necessary this Foundation is to a new Revelation; for be that Case as it will, it is evident that in the Method Christ took, he had not, nor cou'd have the supposed Advantage of such Foundation. For why is this
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Foundation necessary? A Friend of the Gentleman's shall tell you. "Because * it must be difficult, if not impossible, to introduce among Men (who in all civilized Countries are bred up in the Belief of some revealed Religion) a revealed Religion wholly new, or such as has no Reference to a preceding one; for that would be to combat all Men on too many Respects, and not to proceed on a sufficient number of Principles necessary to be assented to by those, on whom the first Impressions of a new Religion are proposed to be made." You see now the Reason of the Necessity of this Foundation; it is that the new Teacher may have the Advantage of old popular Opinions, and fix himself upon the Prejudices of the People. Had Christ any such Advantages, or did he seek any such? The People expected a victorious Prince; he told them they were mistaken: They held as sacred the Traditions of the Elders; he told them those Traditions made the Law of God of none Effect: They valued themselves for being the peculiar People of God; he told them, that People from all Quarters of the World should be the People of God, and sit down with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, in the Kingdom: They thought God could be worshipped only at *Jerusalem*; he told them God might and should be worshipped every where: They were superstitious in the Observance of the Sabbath; he, according to their Reckoning, broke it frequently: In a word, their Washings of Hands and Pots, their supersti-

* *Discourse of the Grounds*, p. 24.

tious Distinctions of Meats, their Prayers in publick, their Villanies in secret, were all reprov'd, expos'd, and condemn'd by him; and the Cry ran strongly against him, that he came to destroy the Law and the Prophets. And now, Sir, what Advantage had Christ of your common and necessary Foundation? What *sufficient Number of Principles* owned by the People, did he build on? If he adhered to the old Revelation in the true Sense, or (which is sufficient to the present Argument) in a Sense not received by the People, it was, in truth, the greatest Difficulty he had to struggle with. And therefore what could tempt him, but purely a Regard to Truth, to take upon himself so many Difficulties which might have been avoided, could he have been but silent as to the old Revelation, and left the People to their Imaginations?

To carry on this Plot, we are told, that the next thing which Jesus did, was to make Choice of proper Persons to be his Disciples. The Gentleman has given us their Character; but, as I suppose he has more Employment for them before he has done, I desire to defer the Consideration of their Abilities and Conduct, till I hear what Work he has for them to do. I would only observe, that thus far this Plot differs from all that ever I heard of. Impostors generally take Advantage of the Prejudices of the People; generally too they make choice of cunning dextrous Fellows to manage under them: But in this Case, Jesus oppos'd all the Notions of the People, and made choice of Simpletons, it seems, to conduct his Contrivances.

BUT what Design, what real End was carrying on all this while? Why, the Gentleman tells us, that the very thing disclaimed, the Temporal Kingdom, was the real thing aimed at under this Disguise. He told the People there was no Foundation to expect a temporal Deliverer, warned them against all who should set up those Pretensions: He declared there was no Ground from the ancient Prophecies, to expect such a Prince; and yet by these very Means he was working his way to an Opportunity of declaring himself to be the very Prince the People wanted. We are still upon the marvellous; every Step opens new Wonders. I blame not the Gentleman; for what but this can be imagined, to give any Account of these Measures imputed to Christ? Be this never so unlikely, yet this is the only thing that can be said. Had Christ been charged with Enthusiasm, it would not have been necessary to assign a Reason for his Conduct: Madness is unaccountable: *Ratione modoque tractari non vult*. But when Design, Cunning, and Fraud, are made the Charge, and carry'd to such an Height, as to suppose him to be a Party to the Contrivance of a sham Resurrection for himself; it is necessary to say, to what End this Cunning tended. It was, we are told, to a Kingdom; and indeed the Temptation was little enough, considering that the chief Conductor of the Plot was to be crucify'd for his Pains. But were the Means made use of at all probable to attain the End? Yes, says the Gentleman, that can't be disputed; for they had really this Effect. The People would have made him King. Very well;

Why was he not King then? Why, it happened unluckily that he would not accept the Offer, but withdrew himself from the Multitude, and lay concealed till they were dispersed. It will be said, perhaps, that Jesus was a better Judge of Affairs than the People, and saw that it was not yet time to accept the Offer. Be it so: Let us see then what follows.

The Government was alarmed, and Jesus was looked on as a Person dangerous to the State; and he had Discernment enough to see, that his Death was determined and inevitable. What does he do then? Why, to make the best of a bad Case, and to save the Benefit of his Undertaking to those who were to succeed him, he pretends to prophesy of his Death, which he knew could not be avoided: And further, that he should rise again the Third Day.—Men do not use to play Tricks *in articulo mortis*; but this Plot had nothing common, nothing in the ordinary way. But what if it should appear, that after the foretelling of his Death, (thro' Despair of his Fortunes, 'tis said) he had it in his Power to set up for King once more, and once more refused the Opportunity? Men in Despair lay hold on the least Help, and never refuse the greatest. Now the Case was really so; after he had foretold his Crucifixion, he came to *Jerusalem* in the triumphant manner the Gentleman mentioned: The People strew'd his Way with Boughs and Flowers, and were all at his Devotion; the *Jewish* Governors lay still for fear of the People. Why was not this Opportunity laid hold on to seize the Kingdom, or at least to secure himself from

from the ignominious Death he expected? For whose Sake was he contented to die? For whose Sake did he contrive this Plot of his Resurrection? Wife and Children he had none; his nearest Relations gave little Credit to him; his Disciples were not fit even to be trusted with the Secret, nor capable to manage any Advantage that cou'd arise from it. However, the Gentleman tells us, a Kingdom has arisen out of this Plot, a Kingdom of Priests. But when did it arise? Some hundred Years after the Death of Christ, in Opposition to his Will, and almost to the Subversion of his Religion. And yet, we are told, this Kingdom was the thing he had in view. I am apt to think the Gentleman is persuaded, that the Dominion he complains of is contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel; I am sure some of his Friends have taken great Pains to prove it so. How then can it be charged as the Intention of the Gospel to introduce it? Whatever the Case was, it cannot surely be suspected, that Christ died to make Popes and Cardinals. The Alterations which have happened in the Doctrines and Practices of Churches, since the Christian Religion was settled by those who had an authentick Commission to settle it, are quite out of the Question, when the Enquiry is about the Truth of the Christian Religion. Christ and his Apostles did not vouch for the Truth of all that shou'd be taught in the Church in future Times. Nay, they foretold and forewarned the World against such corrupt Teachers. 'Tis therefore absurd to challenge the Religion of Christ, because of the Corruptions which have spread a-

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Judge. Sir, If you go to new Matter, the Council on the other side must be admitted to answer.

Mr. A. My Lord, I have no such Intention. I was observing, that the Account I gave of Jesus was only to introduce the Evidence that is to be laid before the Court. It cannot be expected that I should know all the secret Designs of this Contrivance; especially considering that we have but short Accounts of this Affair, and those too conveyed to us thro' Hands of Friends and Parties to the Plot. In such a Case, it is enough if we can imagine what the Views probably were. And in such Case too, it must be very easy for a Gentleman of Parts to raise contrary Imaginations, and to argue plausibly from them. But the Gentleman has rightly observed, that if the Resurrection be a Fraud, there is an End of all Pretensions, good or bad, that were to be supported by it. Therefore I shall go on to prove this Fraud, which is one main Part of the Cause now to be determined.

I beg Leave to remind you, that Jesus, in his Life-time, foretold his Death, and that he should rise again the third Day. The first Part of his Prediction was accomplished; he died upon the Cross, and was buried. I will not trouble you with the Particulars of his Crucifixion, Death, and Burial. 'Tis a well known Story.

Mr. B. My Lord, I desire to know whether the Gentleman charges any Fraud upon this Part of the History; perhaps he may be of Opinion by and by, that there was a Sleight of Hand in
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the Crucifixion, and that Christ only counterfeit-
ed Death.

Mr. *A.* No, no; have no such Fears; he was not crucify'd by his Disciples, but by the *Romans* and the *Jews*; and they were in very good earnest. I will prove beyond Contradiction, that the dead Body was fairly laid in the Tomb, and the Tomb sealed up; and it will be well for you, if you can get it as fairly out again.

Judge. Go on with your Evidence.

Mr. *A.* My Lord, the Crucifixion being over, the dead Body was conveyed to a Sepulchre; and, in the general Opinion, there seem'd to be an End of the whole Design. But the Governors of the *Jews*, watchful for the Safety of the People, call'd to mind, that Jesus in his Life-time had said, that he would rise again on the third Day. It may at first sight seem strange, that they should give any Attention to such a Prophecy; a Prophecy big with Confidence and Presumption, and which, to the common Sense of Mankind, carried its Confutation along with it. And “there’s no other
“ Nation in the World, which would not have
“ slighted such a vain Prognostication of a known
“ Impostor.” But they had warning to be watchful. It was not long before that the People
“ had like to have been fatally deluded, and im-
“ posed on by him, in the pretended Resuscitati-
“ on of *Lazarus*.” They had fully discovered the Cheat in the Case of *Lazarus*, and had narrowly escaped the dangerous Consequences of it. And tho’ Jesus was dead, yet he had many Disciples and Followers alive, who were ready enough to com-

bine in any Fraud to verify the Prediction of their Master. Should they succeed, the Rulers foresaw the Consequences in this Case would be more fatal, than those which before they had narrowly escaped. Upon this Account they addressed themselves to the *Roman* Governor; told him how the Case was; and desired that he would grant them a Guard to watch the Sepulchre; that the Service would not be long, for the Prediction limited the Resurrection to the third Day; and when that was over, the Soldiers might be released from the Duty. *Pilate* granted the Request; and a Guard was set to watch the Sepulchre.

This was not all. The Chief Priests took another Method to prevent all Frauds, and it was the best that could possibly be taken; which was to seal up the Door of the Sepulchre. To understand to what Purpose this Caution was used, you need only consider what is intended by sealing up Doors, and Boxes, or Writings. Is it not for the Satisfaction of all Parties concerned, that they may be sure things are in the State they left them, when they come and find their Seals not injured? This was the Method used by *Darius*, when *Daniel* was cast into the Lion's Den; he sealed the Door of the Den. And for what Purpose? Was it not to satisfy himself and his Court, that no Art had been used to preserve *Daniel*? And when he came and saw *Daniel* safe, and his own Seal untouched, he was satisfied. And indeed if we consider the thing rightly, a Seal thus used imports a Covenant: If you deliver Writings to a Person sealed, and he accepts them so, your Delivery and
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his Acceptance, implies a Covenant between you, that the Writings shall be deliver'd, and the Seal whole. And should the Seal be broken, it would be a manifest Fraud and Breach of Trust. Nay, so strongly is this Covenant implied, that there needs no special Agreement in the Case. 'Tis a Compact which Men are put under by the Law of Nations, and the common Consent of Mankind. When you send a Letter sealed to the Post-house, you have not indeed a special Agreement with all Persons thro' whose Hands it passes, that it shall not be opened by any Hand, but his only to whom it is directed: Yet Men know themselves to be under this Restraint, and that it is unlawful and dishonourable to transgress it.

Since then the Sepulchre was sealed; since the Seal imported a Covenant, consider who were the Parties to this Covenant. They could be no other than the chief Priests on one Side, the Apostles on the other. To prove this, no special Agreement need be shewn. On one side, there was a Concern to see the Prediction fulfilled; on the other, to prevent Fraud in fulfilling it. The Sum of their Agreement was naturally this: That the Seals should be opened at the time appointed for the Resurrection, that all Parties might see and be satisfied, whether the dead Body was come to Life, or no.

What now would any reasonable Man expect from these Circumstances? Don't you expect to hear that the chief Priests and the Apostles met at the time appointed, opened the Seals, and that the Matter in dispute was settled beyond all Con-

troverfly one way or other? But see how it hap-
pen'd. The Seals were broken, the Body stolen
away in the Night by the Disciples; none of the
chief Priests present, or summon'd to see the Seals
open'd. The Guards, when examin'd, were forc'd
to confess the Truth, tho' joined with an Acknow-
ledgment of their Guilt, which made them liable
to be punish'd by *Pilate*; they confessed that they
were asleep, and in the mean time that the Body
was stolen away by the Disciples.

This Evidence of the *Roman* Soldiers, and the
far stronger Evidence arising from the clandestine
Manner of breaking up the Seals, are sufficient
Proofs of Fraud.

But there is another Circumstance in the Case of
equal Weight. Tho' the Seals did not prevent
the Cheat entirely, yet they effectually falsified the
Prediction. According to the Prediction, Jesus was
to rise on the third Day, or after the third Day.
At this Time the chief Priests intended to be pre-
sent, and probably would have been attended by a
great Multitude. This made it impossible to play
any Tricks at that time, and therefore the Apostles
were forced to hasten the Plot; and accordingly
the Resurrection happened a Day before its time.
For the Body was buried on the *Friday*, and was
gone early in the Morning on *Sunday*.

These are plain Facts; Facts drawn from the
Accounts given us by those who are Friends to the
Belief of the Resurrection. The Gentleman won't
call these Imaginations, or complain that I have
given him Schemes instead of Evidence.

Mr. B. My Lord, I am now to consider that Part of the Argument upon which the Gentleman lays the greatest Stress. He has given us his Evidence; mere Evidence, he says, unmixed and clear of all Schemes and Imaginations. In one thing indeed he has been as good as his word; he has proved beyond Contradiction, that Christ died, and was laid in the Sepulchre; for without doubt when the *Jews* sealed the Stone, they took care to see that the Body was there; otherwise their Precaution was useless. He has proved too, that the Prediction of Christ concerning his own Resurrection, was a thing publicly known in all *Jerusalem*; for he owns that this gave Occasion for all the Care that was taken to prevent Fraud. If this open Prediction implies a fraudulent Design, the Evidence is strong with the Gentleman; but if it shall appear to be, what it really was, the greatest Mark that could be given of Sincerity and plain Dealing in the whole Affair, the Evidence will be still as strong, but the Weight of it will fall on the wrong side for the Gentleman's Purpose.

In the next place, the Gentleman seems to be at a great Loss to account for the Credit which the chief Priests gave to the Prediction of the Resurrection, by the Care they took to prevent it. He thinks the Thing in itself was too extravagant and absurd to deserve any Regard; and that no one would have regarded such a Prediction in any other Time or Place. I agree with the Gentleman entirely: But then I demand of him a Reason why the chief Priests were under any Concern about this Prediction: Was it because they had plainly discovered

vered him to be a Cheat and an Impostor? 'Tis impossible. This Reason would have convinced them of the Folly and Presumption of the Prediction. It must therefore necessarily be, that they had discovered something in the Life and Actions of Christ, which raised this Jealousy, and made them listen to a Prophecy in his Case, which in any other Case they would have despised. And what could this be but the secret Conviction they were under by his many Miracles of his extraordinary Powers? This Care therefore of the chief Priests over his dead, helpless Body, is a lasting Testimony of the mighty Works which Jesus did in his Life-time. For had the *Jews* been persuaded that he performed no Wonders in his Life, I think they would not have been afraid of seeing any done by him after his Death.

But the Gentleman is of another mind. He says they had discovered a plain Cheat in the Case of *Lazarus*, whom Christ had pretended to raise from the Dead; and therefore they took all this Care to guard against a like Cheat.

I begin now to want Evidence; I am forbid to call this Imagination; what else to call it, I know not. There is not the least Intimation given from History, that there was any Cheat in the Case of *Lazarus*, or that any one suspected a Cheat. *Lazarus* lived in the Country after he was raised from the Dead; and tho' his Life was secretly and basely sought after, yet no body had the Courage to call him to a Tryal for his Part of the Cheat. It may be said perhaps the Rulers were terrify'd. Very well: But they were not terrify'd when they
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had Christ in their Possession, when they brought him to a Tryal; why did they not then object this Cheat to Christ? It would have been much to their Purpose. Instead of that, they accuse him of a Design to pull down their Temple, to destroy their Law, and of Blasphemy; but not one word of any Fraud in the Case of *Lazarus*, or any other Case.

But not to enter into the Merits of this Cause, which has in it too many Circumstances for your present Consideration; let us take the Case to be as the Gentleman states it, That the Cheat, in the Case of *Lazarus*, was detected. What Consequence is to be expected? In all other Cases, Impostors, once discovered, grow odious and contemptible, and quite incapable of doing further Mischief: So little are they regarded, that even when they tell the Truth, they are neglected. Was it so in this Case? No, says the Gentleman, the *Jews* were the more careful that Christ should not cheat them in his own Resurrection. Surely this is a most singular Case: When the People thought him a Prophet, the chief Priests sought to kill him, and thought his Death wou'd put an End to his Pretensions: When they and the People had discovered him to be a Cheat, then they thought him not safe, even when he was dead, but were afraid he should prove a true Prophet, and, according to his own Prediction, rise again. A needless, a preposterous Fear!

In the next place, the Gentleman tells us how proper the Care was that the chief Priests took. I agree perfectly with him. Human Policy cou'd not
invent

invent a more proper Method to guard against and prevent all Fraud. They delivered the Sepulchre, with the dead Body in it, to a Company of *Roman* Soldiers, who had Orders from their Officer to watch the Sepulchre. Their Care went further still, they sealed the Door of the Sepulchre.

Upon this Occasion, the Gentleman has explained the use of Seals when applied to such Purposes. They imply, he says, a Covenant that the Things sealed up shall remain in the Condition they are, till the Parties to the sealing are agreed to open them. I see no Reason to enter into the Learning about Seals: Let it be as the Gentleman has opened it. What then?

Why then, it seems, the Apostles and chief Priests were in a Covenant that there should be no Resurrection, at least no opening of the Door, till they met together at an appointed Time to view and unseal the Door.

Your Lordship and the Court will now consider the Probability of this Supposition. When Christ was seized and carried to his Tryal, his Disciples fled, and hid themselves for fear of the *Jews*, out of a just Apprehension that they should, if apprehended, be sacrificed with their Master. *Peter* indeed followed him, but his Courage soon failed, and 'tis well known in what manner he denied him. After the Death of Christ, his Disciples were so far from being ready to engage for his Resurrection, or to enter into Terms and Agreements for the Manner in which it should be done, that they themselves did not believe it ever would be. They gave over all Hopes and Thoughts of it;
and

and far from entring into Engagements with the Chief Priests, their whole Concern was to keep themselves concealed from them. This is a well known Case, and I will not trouble you with particular Authorities to prove this Truth. Can any Man now in his right Senses, think that the Disciples, under these Circumstances, entred into this Covenant with the *Jews*? I believe the Gentleman don't think it, and for that Reason says, that Seals so used import a Covenant without a special Agreement. Be it so; and it must then be allowed, that the Apostles were no more concerned in these Seals, than every other Man in the Country, and no more answerable for them; for the Covenant reached to every body as well as to them, since they were under no special Contract.

But I beg Pardon for spending your Time unnecessarily; when the simple plain Account of this Matter, will best answer all these Jealousies and Suspicions. The *Jews*, 'tis plain, were exceedingly solicitous about this Event. For this Reason they obtain'd a Guard from *Pilate*; and when they had, they were still suspicious lest their Guards should deceive them, and enter into Combination against them. To secure this Point, they sealed the Door, and required of the Guards to deliver up the Sepulchre to them sealed as it was. This is the natural and true Account of the Matter. Do but consider it in a parallel Case; suppose a Prince should set a Guard at the Door of his Treasury; and the Officer who placed the Guard should seal the Door, and say to the Soldiers, you shall be answerable for the Seal if I find it broken:

Wou'd not all the World understand the Seal to be fixed to guard against the Soldiers, who might, tho' employ'd to keep off others, be ready enough to pilfer themselves? This is in all such Cases but a necessary Care; you may place Guards, and when you do, all is in their Power; *Et quis custodes custodiat ipsos?*

But it seems, that notwithstanding all this Care, the Seals were broken, and the Body gone: If you complain of this, Sir, demand Satisfaction of your Guards, they only are responsible for it. The Disciples had no more to do in it, than you or I.

The Guards, the Gentleman says, have confessed the Truth, and owned that they were asleep, and that the Disciples in the mean Time stole away the Body. I wish the Guards were in Court, I wou'd ask them, how they came to be so punctual in relating what happen'd when they were asleep; what induced them to believe that the Body was stolen at all; what, that it was stolen by the Disciples; since by their own Confession they were asleep, and saw nothing, saw no body. But since they are not to be had, I wou'd desire to ask the Gentleman the same Questions; and whether he has any Authorities in Point, to shew that ever any Man was admitted as an Evidence in any Court to prove a Fact which happen'd when he was asleep. I see the Gentleman is uneasy; I'll press the Matter no further.

As this Story has no Evidence to support it, so neither has it any Probability. The Gentleman has given you the Character of the Disciples, that they were weak ignorant Men, full of the popular

lar Prejudices, and Superstitions of their Country, which stuck close to them, notwithstanding their long acquaintance with their Master. The Apostles are not much wronged in this Account. And is it likely that such Men should engage in so desperate a Design as to steal away the Body, in Opposition to the combined Power of the *Jews* and *Romans*? What cou'd tempt them to it? What good cou'd the dead Body do them? or if it cou'd have done them any, what Hope had they to succeed in their Attempt? A dead Body is not to be removed by sleight of Hand; it requires many Hands to move it. Besides, the great Stone at the Mouth of the Sepulchre was to be removed; which could not be done silently, or by Men walking on tip-toes to prevent Discovery; so that if the Guards had really been asleep, yet there was no Encouragement to go on this Enterprize: For it is hardly possible to suppose, but that rolling away the Stone, moving the Body, the Hurry and Confusion in carrying it off, must awaken them.

But supposing the thing practicable, yet the Attempt was such as the Disciples consistently with their own Notions cou'd not undertake. The Gentleman says, they continued all their Master's Life-time to expect to see him a temporal Prince; and a Friend of the Gentleman's * has observed, what is equally true, that they had the same Expectation after his Death. Consider now their Case. Their Master was Dead; and they are to contrive to steal away his Body.

* *Grounds*, pag. 33.

For what? Did they expect to make a King of the dead Body, if they cou'd get it into their Power? Or did they think, if they had it, they cou'd raise it to Life again? If they trusted so far to their Master's Prediction, as to expect his Resurrection, (which I think is evident they did not) cou'd they yet think the Resurrection depended on their having the dead Body? It is in all Views absurd. But the Gentleman supposes, that they meant to carry on the Design for themselves in their Master's Name, if they could but have persuaded the People to believe him risen from the Dead. But he does not consider, that by this Supposition he strips the Disciples of every part of their Character at once, and presents to us a new Set of Men in every respect different from the former. The former Disciples were plain weak Men; but these are bold, hardy, cunning, and contriving. The former were full of the Superstition of their Country, and expected a Prince from the Authority of their Prophets; but these are Despisers of the Prophets, and of the Notions of their Countrymen, and are designing to turn these Fables to their own Advantage: For it cannot be supposed that they believed the Prophets, and at the same time thought to accomplish, or defeat them, by so manifest a Cheat, to which they themselves, at least, were conscious.

But let us take leave of these Suppositions, and see how true the Evidence in this Case stands. Guards were placed, and they did their Duty. But what are Guards and Centinels against the Power of God! An Angel of the Lord opened the Sepulchre,

pulchre, the Guards saw him, and became like dead Men. This Account they gave to the chief Priests; who still persisting in their Obstinacy, bribed the Guards to tell the contradictory Story, of their being asleep, and the Body stolen.

I cannot but observe to your Lordship, that all these Circumstances, so much questioned and suspected, were necessary Circumstances, supposing the Resurrection to be true. The Seal was broken, the Body came out of the Sepulchre, the Guards were placed in vain to prevent it. Be it so: I desire to know whether the Gentleman thinks that the Seal put God under Covenant; or cou'd prescribe to him a Method of performing this great Work? Or whether he thinks the Guards were placed to maintain the Seal, in Opposition to the Power of God? If he will maintain neither of these Points, then the opening the Seals, notwithstanding the Guard set upon them, will be an Evidence, not of the Fraud, but of the Power of the Resurrection; and the Guards will have nothing to answer for, but only this, that they were not stronger than God. The Seal was a proper Check upon the Guards; the *Jews* had no other Meaning in it; they cou'd not be so stupid, as to imagine that they cou'd by this Contrivance disappoint the Designs of Providence. And it is surprizing to hear these Circumstances made use of to prove the Resurrection to be a Fraud, which yet cou'd not but happen, supposing the Resurrection to be true.

But there is another Circumstance still, which the Gentleman reckons very material, and upon which, I find, great Stress is laid. The Resurrection

rection happened, we are told, a Day sooner than the Prediction imported. The Reason assigned for it is, that the Execution of the Plot at the Time appointed, was rendred impracticable, because the Chief Priests, and probably great Numbers of the People, were prepared to visit the Sepulchre at that Time; and therefore the Disciples were under a Necessity of hastening their Plot.

This Observation is entirely inconsistent with the Supposition upon which the Reasoning stands. The Gentleman has all along supposed the Resurrection to have been managed by Fraud, and not by Violence; and indeed Violence, if there had been an Opportunity of using it, wou'd have been insignificant. Beating the Guards, and removing the dead Body by Force, wou'd have destroyed all Pretences to a Resurrection. Now surely the Guards, supposing them not to be enow in Number to withstand all Violence, were at least sufficient to prevent, or to discover Fraud. What Occasion then to hasten the Plot for fear of Numbers meeting at the Tomb, since there were Numbers always present sufficient to discover any Fraud; the only Method that cou'd be used in the Case?

Suppose then that we cou'd not give a satisfactory Account of the way of reckoning the Time from the Crucifixion to the Resurrection; yet this we can say, That the Resurrection happened during the Time that the Guards had the Sepulchre in keeping; and 'tis impossible to imagine what Opportunity this cou'd give to Fraud. Had the Time been delayed, the Guards removed, and then a Resurrection pretended, it might with some colour

lour of Reason have been said, Why did he not come within his Time? Why did he chuse to come after his Time, when all Witnesses, who had patiently expected the appointed Hour, were withdrawn? But now what is to be objected? You think he came too soon. But were not your Guards at the Door when he came? Did they not see what happened? And what other Satisfaction cou'd you have had, supposing he had come a Day later?

By saying of this, I do not mean to decline the Gentleman's Objection, which is founded upon a Mistake of a way of speaking, common to the *Jews* and other People; who, when they name any Number of Days and Years, include the first and the last of the Days or Years to make up the Sum. Christ, alluding to his own Resurrection, says, *In three Days I will raise it up*. The Angels report his Prediction thus, *The Son of Man shall be crucify'd, and the third Day rise again*. Elsewhere it is said, *after three Days*; and again, that he was to be in the Bowels of the Earth *three Days and three Nights*. These Expressions are equivalent to each other, for we always reckon the Night into the Day, when we reckon by so many Days. If you agree to do a thing ten Days hence, you stipulate for Forbearance for the Nights as well as Days; and therefore in Reckoning, two Days, and two Days and two Nights, are the same thing. That the Expression, *after three Days*, means inclusive Days, is proved by *Grotius* on *Matt. xxvii. 63.* and by others. The Prediction therefore was, that he
wou'd

wou'd rise on the third Day. Now, he was crucify'd on *Friday*, and buried; he lay in the Grave all *Saturday*, and rose early on *Sunday* Morning. But the Gentleman thinks he ought not to have risen till *Monday*. Pray try what the Use of common Language requires to be understood in a like Case. Suppose you were told, that your Friend sickned on *Friday*, was let blood on *Saturday*, and the third Day he died; what Day wou'd you think he died on? If you have any Doubt about it, put the Question to the first plain Man you meet, and he will resolve it. The *Jews* cou'd have no Doubt in this Case; for so they practised in one of the highest Points of their Law. Every Male Child was to be circumcised on the eighth Day. How did they reckon the Days? Why, the Day of the Birth was one, and the Day of the Circumcision another; and tho' a Child was born towards the very End of the first Day, he was capable of Circumcision on any time of the eighth Day. And therefore it is not new nor strange; that the third Day, in our Case, shou'd be reckoned into the Number, tho' Christ rose at the very beginning of it. It is more strange to reckon whole Years in this manner; and yet this is the constant Method observed in *Ptolemy's* Canon, the most valuable Piece of ancient Chronology, next to the Bible, now extant. If a King lived over the first Day of a Year, and died the Week after, that whole Year is reckoned to his Reign.

I have now gone through the several Objections upon this Head; what Credit they may gain in this Age, I know not; but 'tis plain they had no
Credit

Credit when they were first spread abroad; may 'tis evident that the very Persons who set abroad this Story of the Body being stolen, did not believe it themselves. And not to insist here upon the plain Fact, which was, that the Guards were hired to tell this Lye by the chief Priests, it will appear from the After-Conduct of the chief Priests themselves, that they were conscious that the Story was false. Not long after the Resurrection of Christ, the Disciples having received new Power from above, appeared publickly in *Jerusalem*, and in the very Temple, and testified the Resurrection of Christ, even before those who had murdered him. What now do the chief Priests do? They seize upon the Apostles, they threaten them, they beat them, they scourge them, and all to stop their Mouths, insisting that they should say no more of the Matter. But why did they not, when they had the Disciples in their Power, charge them directly with their notorious Cheat in stealing the Body, and expose them to the People as Impostors? This had been much more to their Purpose, than all their Menaces and ill Usage, and would more effectually have undeceiv'd the People. But of this not one Word is said. They try to murder them, enter into Combinations to assassinate them, prevail with *Herod* to put one of them to Death; but not so much as a Charge against them of any Fraud in the Resurrection. Their Orator *Tertullus*, who could not have missed so fine a Topick of Declamation, had there been but a Suspicion to support it, is quite silent on this Head, and is content to flourish on the Common-Place of Sedition

and Heresy, profaning the Temple, and the like; very Trifles to his Cause, in comparison to the other Accusation, had there been any Ground to make use of it. And yet as it happens, we are sure the very Question of the Resurrection came under Debate; for *Festus* tells King *Agrippa*, that the *Jews* had certain Questions against *Paul*, of one *Jesus* which was dead, whom *Paul* affirmed to be alive. After this, *Agrippa* hears *Paul* himself; and had he suspected, much less had he been convinced that there was a Cheat in the Resurrection, he would hardly have said to *Paul* at the End of the Conference, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*.

But let us see what the *Council* and *Senate* of the Children of *Israel* thought of this Matter, in the most solemn and serious Deliberation they ever had about it. * Not long after the Resurrection, the Apostles were taken; the High Priest thought the Matter of that Weight, that he summoned the Council and Senate of the Children of *Israel*. The Apostles are brought before them, and make their Defence. Part of their Defence is in these Words; *The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a Tree*. The Defence was indeed a heavy Charge upon the Senate, and in the Warmth of their Anger, their first Resolution was to slay them all. But *Gamaliel*, one of the Council, stood up, and told them, that the Matter deserved more Consideration. He recounted to them the History of se-

* Acts v.

veral Impostors who had perished, and concluded with respect to the Case of the Apostles then before them; *If this Work be of Men, it will come to nought; But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found to fight against God.* The Council agreed to this Advice, and after some ill Treatment, the Apostles were discharged. I ask now, and let any Man of common Sense answer; Could *Gamaliel* possibly have given this Advice, and supposed that the Hand of God might be with the Apostles, if he had known that there was a Cheat discovered in the Resurrection of Jesus? Could the whole Senate have followed this Advice, had they believed the Discovery of the Cheat? Was there not among them one Man wise enough to say, How can you suppose God to have any thing to do in this Affair, when the Resurrection of Jesus, upon which all depends, was a notorious Cheat, and manifestly proved to be so? I should but lessen the Weight of this Authority by saying more, and therefore I will rest here, and give way to the Gentleman to go on with his Accusation.

Mr. *A.* My Lord, Before I proceed any further, I beg leave to say a few Words in Reply to what the Gentleman has offered on this Head.

The Gentleman thinks that the Detection in the Case of *Lazarus* ought to have made the *Jews* quite unconcerned in the Case of *Jesus*, and secure as to the Event of his own Resurrection. He says very true, supposing their Care had been for themselves: But Governors have another Care upon their Hands, the Care of their People; and 'tis not enough for them to guard against being im-

posed on themselves, they must be watchful to guard the Multitude against Frauds and Deceits. The chief Priests were satisfied indeed of the Fraud in the Case of *Lazarus*, yet they saw the People deceived by it; and for this Reason, and not for their own Satisfaction, they used the Caution in the Case of the Resurrection of Jesus, which I before laid before you. In so doing, they are well justified, and the Inconsistency charged on the other side, between their Opinion of Jesus, and their Fear of being imposed on by his pretended Resurrection, is fully answered.

The next Observation relates to the Seal of the Sepulchre. The Gentleman thinks the Seal was used as a Check upon the *Roman* Soldiers. But what Reason had the *Jews* to suspect them? They were not Disciples of Jesus; they were Servants of the *Roman* Governor, and employed in the Service of the *Jews*: And I leave it to the Court to judge, whether the *Jews* set the Seal to guard against their Friends, or their Enemies. But if the Seals were really used against the Guards, then the breaking of the Seals is a Proof that the Guards were corrupted: And if so, 'tis easy to conceive how the Body was removed.

As to the Disciples, the Gentleman observes, that the Part allotted them in the Management of the Resurrection supposes an unaccountable Change in their Character. It will not be long before the Gentleman will have Occasion for as great a Change in their Character; for these weak Men you will find soon employed in converting the World, and sent to appear before Kings and Princes in the
Name

Name of their Master; soon you will see them grow wise and powerful, and every way qualified for their extensive and important Business. The only difference between me and the Gentleman on the other side will be found to be this, that I date this Change a little earlier than he does. A small matter surely, to determine the Right of this Controversy.

The last Observation relates to King *Agrippa's* Complaisance to *Paul*, and *Gamaliel's* Advice. I cannot answer for *Agrippa's* Meaning, but certainly he meant but little; and if this matter is to be tryed by his Opinion, we know that he never did turn Christian. As for *Gamaliel*, 'tis probable that he saw great numbers of the People engaged zealously in favour of the Apostles, and might think it prudent to pass the Matter over in silence, and not to come to Extremities. This is a common Case in all Governments; the Multitude and their Leaders often escape Punishment, not because they do not deserve it, but because it is not in some Circumstances, prudent to exact it.

I pass over these things lightly, because the next Article contains the great, to us indeed, who live at this distance, the only great Question; for whatever Reason the *Jews* had to believe the Resurrection, it is nothing to us, unless the Story has been conveyed to us upon such Evidence as is sufficient to support the Weight laid on it.

My Lord, we are now to enter upon the last and main Article of this Case; the Nature of the Evidence upon which the Credit of the Resurrection stands. Before I enquire into the Qualifications of the particular Witnesses whose Words

we are desired to take in this Case; I would ask, why this Evidence, which manifestly relates to the most essential Point of Christianity, was not put beyond all exception? Many of the Miracles of Christ are said to be done in the Streets, nay even the Temple, under the Observation of all the World; but the like is not so much as pretended as to this; nay, we have it upon the Confession of *Peter*, the Ringleader of the Apostles, that Christ appeared * *Not to all the People, but unto witnesses chosen before of God.* Why picking and culling of Witnesses in this Case more than in any other? Does it not import some Suspicion, raise some Jealousy that this Case wou'd not bear the publick Light?

I would ask more particularly, Why did not Jesus after his Resurrection appear openly to the chief Priests and Rulers of the *Jews*? Since his Commission related to them in an especial manner, why were not his Credentials laid before them? The Resurrection is acknowledged to be the chief Proof of his Mission, why then was it concealed from those who were more than all others concerned in the Event of his Mission? Suppose an Ambassador from some foreign Prince, shou'd come into *England*, make his publick Entry thro' the City, pay and receive Visits, and at last refuse to shew any Letters of Credence, or to wait on the King, what wou'd you think of him? Whatever you wou'd think in that Case, you must think in this, for there is no Difference between them.

But we must take the Evidence as it is; it was thought proper in this Case, to have select chosen

Witnesses; and we must now consider who they were, and what Reason we have to take their Word.

The first Witness was an Angel, or Angels: They appeared like Men to some Women who went early to the Sepulchre. If they appeared like Men, upon what ground are we to take them for Angels? The Women saw Men, and therefore they can witness only to the seeing of Men: But I suppose it is the Womens Judgment, and not their Evidence that we are to follow in this Case. Here then we have a Story of one Apparition to support the Credit of another Apparition; and the first Apparition hath not so much as the Evidence of the Women to support it, but is grounded on their Superstition, Ignorance, and Fear. Every Country can afford an hundred Instances of this Kind; and there is this common to them all, that as Learning and Common Sense prevail in any Country, they die away and are no more heard of.

The next Witnesses are the Women themselves: The wisest Men can hardly guard themselves against the Fears of Superstition; poor silly Women therefore in this Case must needs be unexceptionable Witnesses; and fit to be admitted into the number of the chosen Witnesses to attest this Fact. One part of the Account given of them is very rational, that they were surprized and frightened beyond Measure; and I leave it to your Lordship and the Court to judge, how well qualified they were to give a just Relation of what passed.

After this, Jesus appears to two of his Disciples as they were upon a Journey; he joins them, and introduces a Discourse about himself; and spent much time, till it began to grow dark, in expounding the Prophecies relating to the Death and Resurrection of the Messiah. All this while the Disciples knew him not. But then going into an House to lodge together, at Supper he broke Bread, and gave it to them; immediately they knew him, immediately he vanish'd. Here then are two Witnesses more: But what will you call them? Eye-Witnesses? Why their Eyes were open, and they had their Senses, when he reasoned with them and they knew him not. So far therefore they are Witnesses that it was not he. Tell us therefore upon what Account you reject the Evidence of their Sense, before the breaking of the Bread, and insist on it afterwards? And why did Jesus vanish as soon as known; which has more of the Air of an Apparition, than of the Appearance of a real Man restored to Life?

Cleopas, who was one of these two Disciples, finds out the Apostles, to make the Report of what had passed to them. No sooner was the Story told, but Jesus appears among them. They were all frighten'd and confounded, and thought they saw a Spectre. He rebukes them for Infidelity, and their Slowness in believing the Prophecies of his Resurrection; and tho' he refused before to let the Women touch him, (a Circumstance which I ought not to have omitted;) yet now he invites the Apostles to handle him, to examine his Hands and Feet, and search the Wounds of the Cross.

But

But what Body was it they examin'd? The same that came in when the Doors were shut; the same that vanish'd from the two Disciples; the same that the Women might not touch: In a word, a Body quite different from an human Body, which we know cannot pass thro' Walls, or appear or disappear at pleasure. What then cou'd their Hands or Eyes inform them of in this Case? Besides; is it credible that God should raise a Body imperfectly, with the very Wounds in it of which it died? Or if the Wounds were such as destroy'd the Body before, how could a natural Body subsist with them afterwards?

There are more Appearances of Jesus recorded, but so much of the same kind, so liable to the same Difficulties and Objections, that I will not trouble your Lordship and the Court with a distinct Enumeration of them. If the Gentleman on the other side finds any Advantage in any of them more than in these mention'd, I shall have an Opportunity to consider them in my Reply.

It may seem surprizing to you perhaps, that a Matter of this Moment was trusted upon such Evidence as this: But it will be still more surprizing to consider that the several Nations who receiv'd the Gospel, and submitted to the Faith of this Article, had not even this Evidence: For what People or Nation had the Evidence of the Angels, the Women, or even of all the Apostles? So far from it, that every Country had its single Apostle, and receiv'd the Faith upon the Credit of his single Evidence. We have follow'd our Ancestors without Enquiry; and if you examine the thing to the

bottom, our Belief was originally built upon the Word of one Man.

I shall trouble you, Sir, but with one Observation more, which is this: That altho' in common Life we act in a thousand Instances upon the Faith and Credit of human Testimony; yet the Reason for so doing is not the same in the Case before us. In common Affairs, where nothing is asserted but what is probable, and possible, and according to the usual Course of Nature, a reasonable Degree of Evidence ought to determine every Man. For the very Probability, or Possibility of the thing, is a Support to the Evidence; and in such Cases we have no Doubt but a Man's Senses qualify him to be a Witness. But when the thing testified is contrary to the Order of Nature, and, at first sight at least, impossible, what Evidence can be sufficient to overturn the constant Evidence of Nature, which she gives us in the constant and regular Method of her Operations? If a Man tells me he has been in *France*, I ought to give a Reason for not believing him; but if he tells me he comes from the Grave, what Reason can he give why I should believe him? In the Case before us, since the Body raised from the Grave differed from common natural Bodies, as we have before seen; how can I be assured that the Apostles Senses qualified them to judge at all of this Body, whether it was the same, or not the same which was buried? They handled the Body, which yet could pass through Doors and Walls; they saw it, and sometimes knew it, at other times knew it not. In a word, it seems to be a Case exempt from human Evidence.

Men

Men have limited Senses, and a limited Reason; when they act within their Limits, we may give Credit to them; but when they talk of things removed beyond the Reach of their Senses and Reason, we must quit our own, if we believe theirs.

Mr. B. My Lord, In answering the Objections under this Head, I shall find my self obliged to change the Order in which the Gentleman thought proper to place them. He began with complaining, that Christ did not appear publickly to the *Jews* after his Resurrection, and especially to the chief Priests and Rulers; and seem'd to argue, as if such Evidence would have put the Matter in question out of all doubt; but he concluded with an Observation, to prove that no Evidence in this Case can be sufficient; that a Resurrection is a thing in Nature impossible, at least impossible to be proved to the Satisfaction of a rational Enquirer. If this be the Case, why does he require more Evidence, since none can be sufficient? Or to what Purpose is it to vindicate the particular Evidence of the Resurrection of Christ, so long as this general Prejudice, that a Resurrection is incapable of being proved, remains unremoved? I am under a Necessity therefore to consider this Observation in the first place, that it may not lie as a dead Weight upon all I have to offer in Support of the Evidence of Christ's Resurrection.

The Gentleman allows it to be reasonable in many Cases to act upon the Testimony and Credit of others; but he thinks this should be confined to such Cases, where the Thing testified is *probable, possible, and according to the usual Course of Nature.*

The Gentleman does not, I suppose, pretend to know the Extent of all natural Possibilities, much less will he suppose them to be generally known; and therefore his Meaning must be, that the Testimony of Witnesses is to be receiv'd only in Cases which appear to us to be possible. In any other Sense we can have no Dispute; for mere Impossibilities which can never exist, can never be proved. Taking the Observation therefore in this Sense, the Proposition is this: That the Testimony of others ought not to be admitted, but in such Matters as appear probable, or at least possible to our Conceptions. For Instance: A Man who lives in a warm Climate, and never saw Ice, ought upon no Evidence to believe that Rivers freeze and grow hard in cold Countries; for this is improbable, contrary to the usual Course of Nature; and impossible according to his Notion of Things. And yet we all know that this is a plain manifest Case, discernible by the Senses of Men, of which therefore they are qualified to be good Witnesses. An hundred such Instances might be named, but 'tis needless; for surely nothing is more apparently absurd, than to make one Man's Ability in discerning, and his Veracity in reporting plain Facts, depend upon the Skill or Ignorance of the Hearer. And what has the Gentleman said, upon this Occasion, against the Resurrection, more than any Man, who never saw Ice, might say against an hundred honest Witnesses, who assert that Water turns to Ice in cold Climates?

'Tis very true, that Men do not so easily believe upon Testimony of others, things which to
 them

them seem improbable or impossible; but the Reason is not, because the Thing itself admits of no Evidence, but because the Hearer's preconceived Opinion outweighs the Credit of the Reporter, and makes his Veracity to be called in question. For Instance: 'Tis natural for a Stone to roll down Hill, 'tis unnatural for it to roll up Hill: but a Stone moving up Hill is as much the Object of Sense, as a Stone moving down Hill; and all Men in their Senses are as capable of seeing and judging, and reporting the Fact in one Case, as in the other. Shou'd a Man then tell you, that he saw a Stone go up Hill of its own accord, you might question his Veracity, but you cou'd not say the thing admitted no Evidence, because it was contrary to the Law and usual Course of Nature; For the Law of Nature formed to yourself from your own Experience and Reasoning, is quite independent of the Matter of Fact which the Man testifies; and whenever you see Facts yourself, which contradict your Notions of the Law of Nature, you admit the Facts, because you believe yourself: when you do not admit like Facts upon the Evidence of others, it is because you do not believe them; and not because the Facts in their own Nature exclude all Evidence.

Suppose a Man shou'd tell you, that he was come from the Dead: You wou'd be apt to suspect his Evidence. But what wou'd you suspect? That he was not alive, when you heard him, saw him, felt him, and conversed with him? You cou'd not suspect this, without giving up all your Senses, and acting in this Case as you act in no other. Here
then

then you wou'd question, whether the Man had ever been dead. But wou'd you say, that it is incapable of being made plain by human Testimony, that this or that Man died a Year ago? It can't be said. Evidence in this Case is admitted in all Courts perpetually.

Consider it the other way. Suppose you saw a Man publicly executed, his Body afterwards wounded by the Executioner, and carry'd and laid in the Grave; that after this you shou'd be told, that the Man was come to Life again; What wou'd you suspect in this Case? Not that the Man had never been dead; for that you saw yourself: But you wou'd suspect whether he was now alive. But wou'd you say, this Case excluded all human Testimony; and that Men cou'd not possibly discern, whether one with whom they convers'd familiarly, was alive or no? Upon what Ground cou'd you say this? A Man rising from the Grave is an Object of Sense, and can give the same Evidence of his being alive, as any other Man in the World can give. So that a Resurrection consider'd only as a Fact to be prov'd by Evidence, is a plain Case; it requires no greater Ability in the Witnesses, than that they be able to distinguish between a Man dead, and a Man alive: A Point, in which I believe every Man living thinks himself a Judge.

I do allow that this Case, and others of like nature, require more Evidence to give them Credit than ordinary Cases do. You may therefore require more Evidence in these, than in other Cases; but it is absurd to say, that such Cases admit no

Evidence, when the Things in question are manifestly Objects of Sense.

I allow further, that the Gentleman has rightly stated the Difficulty upon the Foot of common Prejudice; and that it arises from hence, that such Cases appear to be contrary to the Course of Nature. But I desire him to consider what this Course of Nature is. Every Man, from the lowest Countryman to the highest Philosopher, frames to himself from his Experience and Observation a Notion of a Course of Nature; and is ready to say of every thing reported to him that contradicts his Experience, that it is contrary to Nature. But will the Gentleman say that every thing is impossible, or even improbable, that contradicts the Notion which Men frame to themselves of the Course of Nature? I think he will not say it. And if he will, he must say that Water can never freeze, for it is absolutely inconsistent with the Notion which Men have of the Course of Nature, who live in the warm Climates. And hence it appears, that when Men talk of the Course of Nature, they really talk of their own Prejudices and Imaginations, and that Sense and Reason are not so much concerned in the Case as the Gentleman imagines. For I ask, Is it from the Evidence of Sense, or the Evidence of Reason, that People of warm Climates think it contrary to Nature, that Water should grow solid and become Ice? As for Sense, they see indeed that Water with them is always Liquid, but none of their Senses tell them that it can never grow Solid; as for Reason it can never so inform them, for right Reason can never
contra-

contradict the Truth of things. Our Senses then inform us rightly what the usual Course of Things is; but when we conclude that things cannot be otherwise, we outrun the Information of our Senses, and the Conclusion stands upon Prejudice, and not upon Reason. And yet such Conclusions form what is generally called the Course of Nature. And when Men upon proper Evidence and Informations admit things contrary to this presupposed Course of Nature, they do not, as the Gentleman expresses it, *quit their own Sense and Reason*, but, in truth, they quit their own Mistakes and Prejudices.

In the Case before us, the Case of the Resurrection; the great Difficulty arises from the like Prejudice: We all know by Experience that all Men die, and rise no more. Therefore we conclude, that for a dead Man to rise to Life again, is contrary to the Course of Nature: and certainly it is contrary to the uniform and settled Course of Things. But if we argue from hence, that it is contrary and repugnant to the real Laws of Nature, and absolutely impossible on that Account, we argue without any Foundation to support us either from our Senses or our Reason. We cannot learn from our Eyes, or Feeling, or any other Sense, that it is impossible for a dead Body to live again: If we learn it at all, it must be from our Reason; and yet what one Maxim of Reason is contradicted by the Supposition of a Resurrection? For my own part, when I consider how I live; that all the Animal Motions necessary to my Life are independent of my Will; that my Heart beats

without my Consent, and without my Direction; that Digestion and Nutrition are performed by Methods to which I am not conscious; that my Blood moves in a perpetual round; which is contrary to all known Laws of Motion; I cannot but think that the Preservation of my Life, in every Moment of it, is as great an Act of Power, as is necessary to raise a dead Man to Life. And whoever so far reflects upon his own Being, as to acknowledge that he owes it to a superior Power, must needs think that the same Power which gave Life to senseless Matter at first, and set all the Springs and Movements a going at the beginning, can restore Life to a dead Body. For surely it is not a greater thing to give Life to a Body once dead, than to a Body that never was alive.

In the next Place must be considered the Difficulties which the Gentleman has laid before you, with regard to the Nature of Christ's Body after the Resurrection. He has produced some Passages which, he thinks, imply, that the Body was not a real natural Body, but a mere Phantom, or Apparition; and thence concludes, that there being no real Object of Sense, there can be no Evidence in the Case.

Presumptions are of no Weight against positive Evidence; and every Account of the Resurrection assures us, that the Body of Christ was seen, felt, and handled by many Persons; who were called upon by Christ so to do, that they might be assured that he had Flesh and Bones, and was not a mere Spectre, as they, in their first Surprise, imagined him to be. 'Tis impossible that they, who

give this Account, should mean by any thing they report, to imply that he had no real Body. 'Tis certain then, that when the Gentleman makes use of what they say to this purpose, he uses their Sayings contrary to their Meaning. For 'tis not pretended that they say, that Christ had not a real human Body after the Resurrection; nor is it pretended they had any such Thought, except only upon the first Surprize of seeing him, and before they had examined him with their Eyes and Hands. But something they have said, which the Gentleman, according to his Notions of Philosophy, thinks, implies that the Body was not real. To clear this Point therefore, I must lay before you the Passages referred to, and consider how justly the Gentleman reasons from them.

The first Passage relates to *Mary Magdalen*, who, the first time she saw Christ, was going to embrace his Feet, as the Custom of the Country was: Christ says to her, * *Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my Brethren, and tell them, &c.* Hence the Gentleman concludes, that Christ's Body was not such an one as wou'd bear the Touch. But how does he infer this? Is it from these Words, *Touch me not*? It cannot be: For Thousands say it every Day, without giving the least Suspicion that their Bodies are not capable of being touched. The Conclusion then must be built on those other Words, *For I am not yet ascended to my Father*. But what have these Words to do with the Reality of his Body? It might be real or not real, for any thing that is here said. There is a Difficulty in these Words, and it may

be hard to give the true Sense of them; but there is no Difficulty in seeing that they have no relation to the Nature of Christ's Body; for of his Body nothing is said. The natural Sense of the Place, as I collect by comparing this Passage with *Matt.* xxviii. 9. is this: *Mary Magdalen*, upon seeing Jesus, fell at his Feet, and laid hold of them, and held them as if she meant never to let them go: Christ said to her, " Touch me not, or hang not " about me now, you will have other Opportuni- " ties of seeing me, for I go not yet to my Father; " lose no time then, but go quickly with my Mes- " sage to my Brethren." I am not concerned to support this particular Interpretation of the Passage; it is sufficient to my Purpose, to shew that the Words cannot possibly relate to the Nature of Christ's Body one way or other.

The next Passage relates to Christ's joining two of his Disciples upon the Road, and conversing with them without being known by them: It grew dark, they pressed him to stay with them that Night; he went in with them, broke Bread, and blessed it, and gave it them, and then they knew him; and immediately he disappeared.

The Circumstance of disappearing shall be considered under the next Head, with other Objections of the like kind: At present I shall only examine the other Parts of this Story, and enquire whether they afford any Ground to conclude that the Body of Christ was not a real one. Had this Piece of History been related of any other Person, I think no such Suspicion cou'd have arisen: For what is there unnatural or uncommon in this Ac-

count? Two Men meet an Acquaintance whom they thought dead; they converse with him for some time without suspecting who he was; the very Persuasion they were under that he was dead, contributed greatly to their not knowing him; besides, he appeared in an Habit and Form different from what he used when he convers'd with them; appeared to them on a Journey, and walked with them side by side; in which Situation no one of the Company has a full View of another. Afterwards, when they were at Supper together, and Lights brought in, they plainly discerned who he was. Upon this Occasion, the Gentleman asks what sort of Witnesses these are; Eye-Witnesses? No; before Supper they were Eye-Witnesses, says the Gentleman, that the Person whom they saw was not Christ; And then he demands a Reason for our rejecting the Evidence of their Sense when they did not know Christ, and insisting on it when they did.

It is no uncommon thing for Men to catch themselves and others by such notable acute Questions, and to be led by the Sprightliness of their Imagination out of the Road of Truth and common Sense. I beg leave to tell the Gentleman a short Story, and then to ask him his own Question. A certain Gentleman who had been some Years abroad, happ'ned in his Return to *England* through *Paris* to meet his own Sister there. She not expecting to see him there, nor he to see her, they conversed together with other Company, at a publick House, for great part of a Day, without knowing each other. At last the Lady began to shew
great

great Signs of Disorder; her Colour came and went, and the Eyes of the Company were drawn towards her; and then she cried out, Oh my Brother! and was hardly held from fainting. Suppose now this Lady were to depose upon Oath in a Court of Justice, that she saw her Brother at *Paris*; I would ask the Gentleman, Whether he would object to the Evidence, and say that she was as good an Eye-witness that her Brother was not there, as that he was; and demand of the Court, why they rejected the Evidence of her Senses when she did not know her Brother, and were ready to believe it when she did? When the Question is answered in this Case, I desire only to have the Benefit of it in the Case now before you. But if you shall be of Opinion that there was some extraordinary Power used on this Occasion, and incline to think that the Expression, (their Eyes were holden) imports as much; then the Case will fall under the next Article. In which

We are to consider Christ's vanishing out of Sight; his coming in and going out when the Doors were shut; and such like Passages; which, as they fall under one Consideration, so I shall speak to them together.

But 'tis necessary first to see what the Apostles affirm distinctly in their Accounts of these Facts; for I think more has been said for them, than ever they said, or intended to say for themselves. In one Place * it is said, *he vanished out of their sight*. Which Translation is corrected in the Margin of

* Luke xxiv. 31.

our Bibles thus, *he ceased to be seen of them.* And the Original † imports no more.

It is said in another Place, that the Disciples being together, *and the doors shut*, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them. How he came is not said: Much less is it said that he came through the Door, or the Key-hole; and for any thing that is said to the contrary, he might come in at the Door, tho' the Disciples saw not the Door open, nor him, till he was in the midst of them. But the Gentleman thinks these Passages prove that the Disciples saw no real Body, but an Apparition. I am afraid that the Gentleman after all his Contempt of Apparitions, and the Superstition on which they are founded, is fallen into the Snare himself, and is arguing upon no better Principles than the common Notions which the Vulgar have of Apparitions. Why else does he imagine these Passages to be inconsistent with the Reality of Christ's Body? Is there no way for a real Body to disappear? Try the Experiment now; do but put out the Candles, we shall all disappear: If a Man falls asleep in the Day-time, all things disappear to him; his Senses are all lock'd up; and yet all things about him continue to be real, and his Senses continue perfect. As shutting out all Rays of Light would make all things disappear; so intercepting the Rays of Light from any particular Body would make that disappear. Perhaps something like this was the Case; or perhaps something else, of which we know nothing. But be the

† ἀφανίσθη ἐν ὧν ἦσαν.

Cafe what it will, the Gentleman's Conclusion is founded on no Principle of true Philosophy: For it does not follow that a Body is not real, because I lose sight of it suddenly. I shall be told perhaps, that this way of accounting for the Passages, is as wonderful, and as much out of the common Course of Things as the other. Perhaps it is so; and what then? Surely the Gentleman does not expect, that in order to prove the Reality of the greatest Miracle that ever was, I should shew that there was nothing miraculous in it, but that every thing happen'd according to the ordinary Course of things? My only Concern is to shew, that these Passages do not infer that the Body of Christ after the Resurrection was no real Body. I wonder the Gentleman did not carry his Argument a little further, and prove that Christ, before his Death, had no real Body; for we read, that when the Multitude would have thrown him down a Precipice, he went through the midst of them unseen. Now nothing happen'd after his Resurrection more unaccountable than this that happen'd before it; and if the Argument be good at all, it will be good to prove that there never was such a Man as Jesus in the World. Perhaps the Gentleman may think this a little too much to prove; and if he does, I hope he will quit the Argument in one Case, as well as in the other; for Difference there is none.

Hitherto we have been called upon to prove the Reality of Christ's Body, and that it was the same after the Resurrection that it was before; but the next Objection complains, that the Body was too
much

much the same with that which was buried; for the Gentleman thinks that it had the same mortal Wounds open and uncured, of which it died. His Observation is grounded upon the Words which Christ uses to *Thomas*, * *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side.* Is it here affirmed that *Thomas* did actually put his Hand into his Side, or so much as see his Wounds fresh and bleeding? Nothing like it. But 'tis supposed from the Words of Christ; for if he had no Wounds, he would not have invited *Thomas* to probe them. Now the Meaning of Christ will best appear by an Account of the Occasion he had to use this Speech. He had appeared to his Disciples, in the Absence of *Thomas*, and shewn them his Hands and Feet, which still had the Marks of his Crucifixion: The Disciples report this to *Thomas*: He thought the Thing impossible, and expressed his Unbelief, as Men are apt to do when they are positive, in a very extravagant manner: You talk, says he, of the Prints of the Nails in his Hands and Feet; for my part, I'll never believe this thing, *except I shall see in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and put my Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thrust my Hand into his Side.* Now in the first place, here is nothing said of open Wounds; *Thomas* talks only of putting his Finger into the Print, that is, the Scar of the Nails, and of thrusting his Hand into his Side. And in common Speech, to thrust an Hand into any one's Side,

* John xx. 27.

does not signify to thrust it through the Side into the Bowels. Upon this Interpretation of the Words, which is a plain and natural one, the Gentleman's Objection is quite gone. But suppose *Thomas* to mean what the Gentleman means; in that Case the Words of Christ are manifestly a severe Reproach to him for his Infidelity: Here, says Christ, are my Hands and my Side; take the Satisfaction you require; thrust your Fingers into my Hands, your Hand into my Side; repeating to him his own Words, and calling him to his own Conditions; which, to a Man beginning to see his Extravagance, is of all Rebukes the severest. Such Forms of Speech are used on many Occasions, and are never understood to import that the thing proposed is proper, or always practicable. When the *Grecian* Women reproached their Sons with Cowardice, and called to them as they were flying from the Enemy, to come and hide themselves once more, like Children as they were, in their Mothers Wombs; he would have been ridiculous who had asked the Question, Whether the Women really thought that they cou'd take their Sons into their Wombs again?

I have now gone through the Objections which were necessarily to be removed before I could state the Evidence in this Case. I am sensible I have taken up too much of your Time; but I have this to say in my Excuse; That Objections built on popular Notions and Prejudices, are easily conveyed to the Mind in few Words, and so conveyed, make strong Impressions: But whoever answers the Objections, must encounter all

the Notions to which they are allied, and to which they owe their Strength; and 'tis well if with many Words he can find Admittance.

I come now to consider the Evidence on which our Belief of the Resurrection stands. And here I am stopped again. A general Exception is taken to the Evidence, that it is imperfect, unfair; and a Question is asked, Why did not Christ appear publicly to all the People, especially to the Magistrates? Why were some Witnesses culled and chosen out, and others excluded?

It may be sufficient perhaps to say, that where there are Witnesses enow, no Judge, no Jury complains for want of more; and therefore, if the Witnesses we have are sufficient, 'tis no Objection that we have not others, and more. If three credible Men attest a Will, which are as many as the Law requires, would any Body ask, Why all the Town were not called to set their Hands? But why were these Witnesses culled and chosen out? Why? For this Reason, that they might be good ones. Does not every wise Man chuse proper Witnesses to his Deed and to his Will? And does not a good Choice of Witnesses give Strength to every Deed? How comes it to pass then, that the very thing which shuts out all Suspicion in other Cases, should in this Case only, be of all others, the most suspicious thing itself?

What reason there is to make any Complaints on the behalf of the *Jews*, may be judged, in part, from what has already appeared. Christ suffered openly in their sight; and they were so

well apprized of his Prediction, that he should rise again, that they set a Guard on his Sepulchre; and from their Guards they learnt the Truth. Every Soldier was to them a Witness of the Resurrection of their own chusing. After this, they had not one Apostle, (which the Gentleman observes was the Case of other People) but all the Apostles, and many other Witnesses with them, and in their Power. The Apostles testified the Resurrection to them; not only to the People, but to the Elders of *Israel* assembled in Senate: To support their Evidence, they were enabled to work, and did work Miracles openly in the Name of Christ. These People therefore have the least Reason to complain; and had of all others the fullest Evidence; and in some respects such as none but themselves cou'd have, for they only were Keepers of the Sepulchre. I believe, if the Gentleman was to chuse an Evidence to his own Satisfaction in the like Case, he would desire no more than to keep the Sepulchre, with a sufficient number of Guards.

But the Argument goes further. It is said that Jesus was sent with a special Commission to the *Jews*, that he was their Messias; and as his Resurrection was his main Credential, he ought to have appeared publicly to the Rulers of the *Jews* after his Resurrection; that in doing otherwise, he acted like an Ambassador pretending Authority from his Prince, but refusing to shew his Letters of Credence.

I was afraid, when I suffered myself to be drawn into this Argument, that I should be led into Mat-

ters fitter to be decided by Men of another Profession, than by Lawyers. But since there is no Help now, I will lay before you what appears to me to be the natural and plain Account of this Matter; leaving it to others, who are better qualified, to give a fuller Answer to the Objection.

It appears to me, by the Accounts we have of Jesus, that he had two distinct Offices: One, as the Messias particularly promised to the *Jews*; another, as he was to be the great High Priest of the World. With respect to the first Office, he is called * *the Apostle of the Hebrews*; the † *Minister of the Circumcision*; and says himself, ‖ *I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. Accordingly when he sent out his Apostles in his Life-time to preach, he expressly forbids them to go to the *Gentiles* or *Samaritans*; but go, ‡ says he, *to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. Christ continued in the Discharge of this Office during the Time of his natural Life, till he was finally rejected by the *Jews*. And it is observable, that the last time he spoke to the People, according to St. *Matthew's* Account, he solemnly took leave of them, and closed his Commission. He had been long among them publishing glad Tidings; but when all his Preaching, all his Miracles, had proved to be in vain, the last thing he did was to denounce the Woes they had brought on themselves. The 23^d Chapter of St. *Matthew* recites these Woes; and at the End of them Christ takes this passionate leave of *Jerusalem*: “ O *Jerusalem*, Je-

* Heb. iii. 1.

† Matth. xv. 24.

‡ Rom. xv. 8.

‡ Matth. x. 5, 6.

“ *rusalem*, thou that killest the Prophets, and sto-
 “ nest them which are sent unto thee; how often
 “ wou’d I have gathered thy Children together,
 “ even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her
 “ Wings, and ye would not! Behold, your House
 “ is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you,
 “ Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say,
 “ Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the
 “ Lord”. ’Tis remarkable, that this Passage, as
 recorded by St. *Matthew*, and St. *Luke* twice over,
 is determin’d, by the Circumstances, to refer to
 the near Approach of his own Death, and the ex-
 treme Hatred of the *Jews* to him: And therefore
 those Words, *Ye shall not see me henceforth*, are to
 be dated from the Time of his Death, and mani-
 festly point out the End of his particular Mission
 to them. From the making this Declaration, as
 it stands in St. *Matthew*, his Discourses are to his
 Disciples; and they chiefly relate to the miserable
 and wretched Condition of the *Jews*, which was
 now decreed, and soon to be accomplish’d. Let
 me now ask, Whether, in this state of things, any
 farther Credentials of Christ’s Commission to the
Jews cou’d be demanded or expected? He was re-
 jected, his Commission was determin’d, and with
 it the Fate of the Nation was determin’d also:
 What Use then of more Credentials? As to ap-
 pearing to them after his Resurrection, he cou’d
 not do it consistently with his own Prediction; *Ye*
shall see me no more, till ye shall say, Blessed is he
that cometh in the name of the Lord. The *Jews*
 were not in this Disposition after the Resurrection,
 nor are they in it yet.

The Resurrection was the Foundation of Christ's new Commission, which extended to all the World. Then it was he declared, that *all Power was given unto him in heaven and in earth*. Then he gave a new Commission to his Disciples, not restrained to the House of *Israel*, but to go and *teach all Nations*. This Prerogative the *Jews* had under this Commission, that the Gospel was every-where first offered to them; but in no other Terms than it was offered to the rest of the World. Since then this Commission, of which the Resurrection was the Foundation, extended to all the World alike; What Ground is there to demand special and particular Evidence to the *Jews*? The Emperor and the Senate of *Rome* were a much more considerable Part of the World, than the chief Priests and the Synagogue; Why does not the Gentleman object then, that Christ did not shew himself to *Tiberius* and his Senate? And since all Men have an equal Right in this Case, Why may not the same Demand be made for every Country; nay, for every Age? And then the Gentleman may bring the Question nearer home; and ask, Why Christ did not appear in *England* in King *George's* Reign? There is, to my Apprehension, nothing more unreasonable, than to neglect and despise plain and sufficient Evidence before us, and to sit down to imagine what Kind of Evidence wou'd have pleased us; and then to make the Want of such Evidence an Objection to the Truth; which yet, if well consider'd, wou'd be found to be well establish'd.

The Observation I have made upon the Resurrection of Christ, naturally leads to another; which will help to account for the Nature of the Evidence we have in this great Point. As the Resurrection was the opening a new Commission, in which all the World had an Interest; so the Concern naturally was, to have a proper Evidence to establish this Truth, and which shou'd be of equal Weight to all. This did not depend upon the Satisfaction given to private Persons, whether they were Magistrates or not Magistrates; but upon the Conviction of those, whose Office it was to be, to bear Testimony to this Truth in the World. In this Sense the Apostles were chosen to be Witnesses of the Resurrection, because they were chosen to bear Testimony to it in the World; and not because they only were admitted to see Christ after his Resurrection: For the Fact is otherwise. The Gospel indeed, concerned to shew the Evidence on which the Faith of the World was to rest, is very particular in setting forth the ocular Demonstration which the Apostles had of the Resurrection; and mentions others, who saw Christ after his Resurrection, only accidentally, and as the Thread of the History led to it. But yet 'tis certain, there were many others, who had this Satisfaction, as well as the Apostles. St. *Luke* tells us, that when Christ appeared to the eleven Apostles, there were others with them*; who they were, or how many they were, he says not. But it appears in the *Acts*, when an Apostle was to be chosen in the room of *Judas*; and the chief Qualification requi-

* Luke xxiv. 33.

red was, that he shou'd be one capable of being a Witness of the Resurrection; that there were present an hundred and twenty so qualified.* And St. *Paul* says, that Christ after his Rising was seen by 500 at once, many of whom were living when he appealed to their Evidence. So that the Gentleman is mistaken, when he imagines that a few only were chosen to see Christ after he came from the Grave. The Truth of the Case is, that out of those who saw him, some were chosen to bear Testimony to the World, and for that Reason had the fullest Demonstration of the Truth, that they might be the better able to give Satisfaction to others. And what was there in this Conduct to complain of? What to raise any Jealousy or Suspicion?

As to the Witnesses themselves; the first the Gentleman takes notice of, are the Angels and the Women. The Mention of Angels led naturally to Apparitions; and the Women were called poor silly Women; and there is an End of their Evidence. But to speak seriously: Will the Gentleman pretend to prove, that there are no intelligent Beings between God and Man; or that they are not Ministers of God; or that they were improperly employed in this great and wonderful Work, the Resurrection of Christ? Till some of these Points are disproved, we may be at rest; for the Angels were Ministers, and not Witnesses of the Resurrection. And it is not upon the Credit of the poor silly Women that we believe Angels were

* Acts i. Compare Verses 15, 21, 22 together.

concerned, but upon the Report of those who wrote the Gospels, who deliver it as a Truth known to themselves, and not merely as a Report taken from the Women.

But for the Women, what shall I say? Silly as they were, I hope at least they had Eyes and Ears, and cou'd tell what they heard and saw. In this Case they tell no more; they report that the Body was not in the Sepulchre; but so far from reporting the Resurrection, that they did not believe it, and were very anxious to find to what Place the Body was removed. Further, they were not employed. For, I think, the Gentleman in another Part observes rightly, that they were not sent to bear Testimony to any People. But suppose them to be Witnesses; suppose them to be improper ones; yet the Evidence of the Men surely is not the worse, because some Women happened to see the same thing which they saw. And if Men only must be admitted, of them we have enow to establish this Truth.

I will not spend your Time in enumerating these Witnesses, or in setting forth the Demonstration they had of the Truth which they report. These Things are well known. If you question their Sincerity, they lived miserably, and died miserably, for the sake of this Truth. And what greater Evidence of Sincerity can Man give or require? And what is still more, they were not deceived in their Expectation by being ill treated; for he who employed them, told them before-hand, that the World would hate them, and treat them with Contempt and Cruelty.

But leaving these weighty and well-known Circumstances to your own Reflexion, I beg leave to lay before you another Evidence, passed over in Silence by the Gentleman on the other Side. He took notice that a Resurrection was so extraordinary a Thing, that no human Evidence cou'd support it. I am not sure that he is not in the right. If twenty Men were to come into *England* with such a Report from a distant Country, perhaps they might not find twenty more here to believe their Story. And I rather think the Gentleman may be in the right, because in the present Case I see clearly, that the Credit of the Resurrection of Christ was not trusted to mere human Evidence. To what Evidence it was trusted, we find by his own Declaration: *The Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; and ye also* (speaking to his Apostles) *shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning* *. And therefore tho' the Apostles had convers'd with him forty Days after his Resurrection, and had received his Commission to go teach all Nations, yet he expressly forbids them entring upon the Work, till they shou'd receive Powers from Above †. And St. Peter explains the Evidence of the Resurrection in this manner: *We* (the Apostles) *are his Witnesses of these Things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them who obey him* ‡.

Now, What were the Powers received by the Apostles? Were they not the Powers of Wisdom

* John xv. 26, 27. † Acts i. 14. ‡ Acts v. 32.

and Courage, by which they were enabled to appear before Rulers and Princes in the Name of Christ; the Power of Miracles, even of raising the Dead to Life, by which they convinc'd the World, that God was with them in what they said and did? With respect to this Evidence, *St. John* says, *If we receive the Witness of Men, the Witness of God is greater* *. Add to this, that the Apostles had a Power to communicate these Gifts to Believers. Can you wonder that Men believed the Reality of those Powers of which they were Partakers, and became conscious to themselves? With respect to these communicated Powers, I suppose *St. John* speaks, when he says, *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Witness in himself* †. Appealing not to an inward Testimony of the Spirit, in the Sense of some modern Enthusiasts, but to the Powers of the Spirit, which Believers received, and which were seen in the Effects that followed.

It was objected, that the Apostles separated themselves to the Work of the Ministry, and one went into one Country, another to another; and consequently, that the Belief of the Resurrection was originally receiv'd every where upon the Testimony of one Witness. I will not examine this Fact: Suppose it to be so. But did this one Witness go alone, when he was attended with the Powers of Heaven? Was not every blind Man restored to Sight, and every lame Man to his Feet, a new Witness to the Truth reported by the first? Besides, when the People of different Countries

* 1 John v. 9.

† Ibid. ver. 10.

came to compare Notes, and found that they had all received the same Account of Christ, and of his Doctrine; then surely the Evidence of these distant Witnesses thus united, became stronger than if they had told their Story together: For twelve Men separately examined, form a much stronger Proof for the Truth of any Fact, than twelve Men agreeing together in one Story.

If the same Thing were to happen in our own Time: If one or two were to come into *England*, and report that a Man was raised from the Dead; and in consequence of it, teach nothing but that we ought to love God and our Neighbours: If to confirm their Report, they shou'd, before our Eyes, cure the Blind, the Deaf, the Lame, and even raise the Dead to Life; if endow'd with all these Powers, they should live in Poverty and Distress, and patiently submit to all that Scorn, Contempt, and Malice cou'd contrive to distress them; and at last sacrifice even their Lives in Justification of the Truth of their Report: If upon Enquiry we should find, that all the Countries in *Europe* had received the same Account, supported by the same miraculous Powers, attested in like manner by the Sufferings, and confirmed by the Blood of the Witnesses: I would fain know what any reasonable Man would do in this Case? Wou'd he despise such Evidence? I think he wou'd not; and whoever thinks otherwise, must say, That a Resurrection, tho' in its own Nature possible, is yet such a Thing, in which we ought not to believe either God or Man.

Judge. Have you done, Sir?

Mr. B.

Mr. B. Yes, my Lord.

Judge. Go on Mr. A. if you have any thing to say in Reply.

Mr. A. My Lord, I shall trouble you with very little. The Objections and Answers under this Head, I shall leave to the Judgment of the Court; and beg leave only to make an Observation or two upon the last part of the Gentleman's Argument.

And first, with respect to the Sufferings of the Apostles and Disciples of Jesus; and the Argument drawn from thence for the Truth of their Doctrines and Assertions; I beg leave to observe to you, That there is not a false Religion or Pretence in the World, but can produce the same Authority, and shew many Instances of Men, who have suffered even to Death for the Truth of their several Professions. If we consult only modern Story, we shall find Papists suffering for Popery, Protestants for their Religion; and among Protestants, every Sect has had its Martyrs; Puritans, Quakers, Fifth-Monarchy Men. In *Henry VIIIth's* Time, *England* saw both Popish and Protestant Martyrs; in *Queen Mary's* Reign the Rage fell upon Protestants; in *Queen Elizabeth's*, Papists and Puritans were called sometimes, tho' rarely, to this Tryal. In later Times, sometimes Churchmen, sometimes Dissenters, were persecuted. What must we say then? All these Sufferers had not Truth with them; and yet, if there be any Weight in this Argument from Suffering, they have all a Right to plead it.

But I may be told, perhaps, that Men by their Sufferings, tho' they do not prove their Doctrines to be true, yet prove at least their own Sincerity:

As

As if it were a thing impossible for Men to dissemble at the Point of Death! Alas! How many Instances are there of Men's denying Facts plainly proved, asserting Facts plainly disproved, even with the Rope about their Necks? Must all such pass for innocent Sufferers, sincere Men? If not, it must be allowed, that a Man's Word at the Point of Death is not always to be relied on.

Another Observation I wou'd make, is with respect to the Evidence of the Spirit, on which so much Stress is laid. It has been hitherto insisted on, that the Resurrection was a Matter of Fact, and such a Fact, as was capable and proper to be supported by the Evidence of Sense. How comes it about, that this Evidence, this which is the proper Evidence, is given up as insufficient, and a new improper Evidence introduced? Is it not surprising, that one great Miracle shou'd want an hundred more to prove it? Every Miracle is itself an Appeal to Sense, and therefore admits no Evidence but that of Sense. And there is no Connection between a Miracle done this Year and last Year. It does not follow therefore, because *Peter* cured a lame Man (allowing the Fact) that therefore Christ rose from the Dead.

But allowing the Gentleman all he demands, what is it to us? They who had the Witness within them, did perhaps very well to consult him, and to take his Word; but how am I, or others, who have not this Witness in us, the better for it? If the first Ages of the Church saw all the Wonders related by the Gentleman, and believed, it shews at least, in his Opinion, that this strong Evidence

dence was necessary to create the Belief he requires; why then does he require this Belief of us, who have not this strong Evidence?

Judge. Very well. Gentlemen of the Jury, you have heard the Proofs and Arguments on both Sides, and it is now your Part to give a Verdict.

Here the Gentlemen whispered together, and the Foreman stood up.

Foreman. My Lord, The Cause has been long, and consists of several Articles, therefore the Jury hope you will give them your Directions.

Judge. No, no; you are very able to judge without my Help.

Mr. *A.* My Lord, Pray consider, you appointed this Meeting, and chose your Office. Mr. *B.* and I have gone through our Parts, and have some Right to insist on your doing your Part.

Mr. *B.* I must join, Sir, in that Request.

Judge. I have often heard, that all Honour has a Burden attending it; but I did not suspect it in this Office, which I conferred upon myself. But since it must be so, I will recollect, and lay before you, as well as I can, the Substance of the Debate.

Gentlemen of the Jury; The Question before you, is, Whether the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ are guilty of giving false Evidence, or no.

Two sorts of Objections, or Accusations are brought against them. One charges Fraud and

Deceit

Deceit on the Transaction itself; the other charges the Evidence as forged, and insufficient to support the Credit of so extraordinary an Event.

There are also three Periods of Time to be considered.

The first takes in the Ministry of Christ, and ends at his Death. During this Period the Fraud is supposed to be contrived.

The second reaches from his Death to his Resurrection. During this Period the Fraud is supposed to be executed.

The third begins from the Resurrection, and takes in the whole Ministry of the Apostles. And here the Evidence they gave the World for this Fact is the main Consideration.

As to the first Period of Time, and the Fraud charged upon Jesus, I must observe to you, that this Charge had no Evidence to support it; all the Facts reported of Jesus stand in full Contradiction to it. To suppose, as the Council did, that this Fraud might possibly appear, if we had any *Jewish* Books written at the Time, is not to bring Proof, but to wish for Proof; for as it was rightly observed on the other side, how does Mr. A. know there were any such Books? And since they are lost, how does he know what was in them? Were such Books extant, they might probably prove beyond Dispute the Facts recorded in the Gospels.

You were told that the *Jews* were a very superstitious People, much addicted to Prophecy, and particularly that they had a strong Expectation about the Time that Christ appeared, to have a victorious Prince rise among them. This is laid

as the Ground of Suspicion; and in fact, many Impostors you are told, set up upon these Notions of the People; and thence it is inferred that Christ built his Scheme upon the Strength of these popular Prejudices. But when this Fact came to be examined on the other Side, it appeared that Christ was so far from falling in with these Notions, and abusing the Credulity of the People, that it was his main Point to correct these Prejudices, to oppose these Superstitions; and by these very Means, he fell into Disgrace with his Countrymen, and suffered as one, who in their Opinion, destroyed the Law and the Prophets. With respect to temporal Power, so far was he from aiming at it, that he refused it when offered: So far from giving any Hopes of it to his Disciples, that he invited Men upon quite different Terms; *To take up the Cross, and follow him.* And it is observable, that after he had foretold his Death and Resurrection, he continued to admonish his Disciples of the Evils they were to suffer; to tell them that the World would hate them, and abuse them; which surely to common Sense has no Appearance that he was then contriving a Cheat, or encouraging his Disciples to execute it.

But as ill supported as this Charge is, there was no avoiding it; it was Necessity, and not Choice, which drove the Gentleman to it: For since Christ had foretold his Resurrection, if the whole was a Cheat, he certainly was conscious to it, and consequently the Plot was laid in his own Time. And yet the supposing Christ conscious to such a Fraud in these Circumstances, is contrary to all Probabi-

lity. It is very improbable, that He, or any Man, should without any Temptation, contrive a Cheat to take place after his Death. And if this could be supposed, 'tis highly improbable that he should give publick Notice of it, and thereby put all Men on their guard; especially considering there were only a few Women, and twelve Men of low Fortunes, and mean Education, to conduct the Plot; and the whole Power of the *Jews* and *Romans* to oppose it.

Mr. *A.* seemed sensible of these Difficulties, and therefore would have varied the Charge, and have made Christ an Enthusiast, and his Disciples only Cheats. This was not properly moved, and therefore not debated; for which Reason I shall pass it over with this short Observation; that Enthusiasm is as contrary to the whole Character and Conduct of Christ, as even Fraud is. Besides, this Imagination, if allowed, goes only to Christ's own part; and leaves the Charge of Fraud, in its full extent, upon the Management from the time of his Death, and therefore is of no use, unless the Fraud afterwards be apparent. For if there really was a Resurrection, it will sufficiently answer the Charge of Enthusiasm.

I pass on then to the second Period, to consider what happen'd between the Death and Resurrection of Christ. And here it is agreed that Christ died, and was buried. So far then there was no Fraud.

For the better understanding the Charge here, we must recollect a material Circumstance reported by one of the Evangelists; which is this:
After

After Christ was buried, the chief Priests and *Pharisees* came to *Pilate* the *Roman* Governor, and informed him that this Deceiver, (meaning Jesus) had in his Life-time foretold, that he would rise again after three Days; that they suspected his Disciples would steal away the Body, and pretend a Resurrection; and then the *last Error would be worse than the first*. They therefore desire a Guard to watch the Sepulchre, to prevent all Fraud. They had one granted; accordingly they placed a Watch on the Sepulchre, and sealed up the Stone at the Mouth of it.

What the Event of this Case was, the same Writer tells us. The Guards saw the Stone removed by Angels, and for Fear they became as dead Men: When they came to the City, they reported to the chief Priests what had happen'd: A Council is called, and a Resolution taken to bribe the Soldiers to say, that the Body was stolen while they were asleep; and the Council undertook to excuse the Soldiers to *Pilate*, for their Negligence in falling asleep when they were on Duty.

Thus the Fact stands in the original Record. Now the Council for *Woolston* maintains, that the Story reported by the Soldiers, after they had been bribed by the chief Priests, contains the true Account of this pretended Resurrection.

The Gentleman was sensible of a Difficulty in his way, to account for the Credit which the *Jews* gave to the Prediction of Christ; for if, as he pretends, they knew him to be an Im-

postor, what Reason had they to take any Notice of his Prediction? And therefore, that very Caution in this Case betrayed their Concern, and shewed that they were not satisfied that his Pretensions were groundless. To obviate this, he says, that they had discovered before, one great Cheat in the Case of *Lazarus*, and therefore were suspicious of another in this Case. He was answered, That the Discovery of a Cheat in the Case before-mentioned, ought rather to have set them at ease, and made them quite secure as to the Event of the Prediction. In Reply he says, that the chief Priests, however satisfied of the Cheat themselves, had found that it prevailed among the People; and to secure the People from being farther imposed on, they used the Caution they did.

This is the Substance of the Argument on both Sides.

I must observe to you, that this Reasoning from the Case of *Lazarus* has no Foundation in History; there is no Pretence for saying, that the *Jews* in this whole Affair had any particular Regard to the raising of *Lazarus*: And if they had any such just Suspicion, why was it not mention'd at the Trial of Christ? There was then an Opportunity of opening the whole Fraud, and undeceiving the People. The *Jews* had a plain Law for punishing a false Prophet; and what cou'd be a stronger Conviction, than such a Cheat made manifest? Why then was this Advantage lost?

The Gentleman builds this Observation on these Words, *So the last Error shall be worse than the first.*

But

But is there here any thing said about *Lazarus*? No; the Words are a proverbial Form of Speech, and probably were used without relation to any particular Case. But if a particular Meaning must be assigned, it is more probable, that the Words being used to *Pilate*, contained a Reason applicable to him. Now *Pilate* had been drawn in to consent to the Crucifixion, for fear the *Jews* shou'd set up Jesus to be their King in Opposition to *Cæsar*; therefore say the chief Priests to him, If once the People believe him to be risen from the dead, the last Error will be worse than the first; *i. e.* they will be more inclined and encouraged to rebel against the *Romans* than ever. This is a natural Sense of the Words, as they are used to move the *Roman* Governor to allow them a Guard. Whether *Lazarus* were dead or alive; whether Christ came to destroy the Law and the Prophets, or to establish or confirm them, was of little moment to *Pilate*. It is plain, he was touched by none of these Considerations; and refused to be concerned in the Affair of Christ, till he was alarm'd with the Suggestions of Danger to the *Roman* State. This was the *first* Fear that moved him; must not therefore the *second* now suggested to him be of the same Kind?

The next Circumstance to be consider'd, is that of the Seal upon the Stone of the Sepulchre. The Council for *Woolston* supposes an Agreement between the *Jews* and Disciples about setting this Seal. But for this Agreement there is no Evidence; nay, to suppose it, contradicts the whole Series of the History, as the Gentleman on the

other Side observ'd. I will not enter into the Particulars of this Debate; for it is needless. The plain natural Account given of this Matter, shuts out all other Suppositions. Mr. *B.* observ'd to you, that the *Jews* having a Guard, set the Seal to prevent any Combination among the Guards to deceive them; which seems a plain and satisfactory Account. The Council for *W.* replies, Let the Use of the Seals be what they will, it is plain they were broken; and if they were used as a Check upon the *Roman* Soldiers, then probably they consented to the Fraud; and then 'tis easily understood how the Body was removed.

I must observe to you here, that this Suspicion agrees neither with the Account given by the Evangelist, nor with the Story set about by the *Jews*; so that it is utterly unsupported by any Evidence.

Nor has it any Probability in it. For what cou'd move *Pilate*, and the *Roman* Soldiers, to propagate such a Cheat? He had crucify'd Christ for no other Reason, but for fear the People shou'd revolt from the *Romans*; perhaps too he consented to place a Guard upon the Sepulchre, to put an end to the People's Hope in Jesus; and is it likely at last that he was consenting to a Cheat, to make the People believe him risen from the dead? The thing, of all others which he was obliged, as his Apprehensions were, to prevent.

The next Circumstance insisted on as a Proof of the Fraud, is, that Jesus rose before the Time he had appointed. Mr. *A.* supposes that the Disciples hasten'd the Plot, for fear of falling in with Multi-

Multitudes, who waited only for the appointed Time to be at the Sepulchre, and to see with their own Eyes. He was answer'd, that the Disciples were not, cou'd not be concern'd, or be present at moving the Body; that they were dispers'd, and lay concealed for fear of the *Jews*: that hast'ning the Plot was of no Use, for the Resurrection happened whilst the Guards were at the Sepulchre; who were probably enow to prevent Violence; certainly enow to discover it, if any were used.

This Difficulty then rests merely upon the reckoning of the Time. Christ died on *Friday*, rose early on *Sunday*. The Question is, Whether this was rising the third Day according to the Prediction? I will refer the Authorities made use of in this Case to your Memory, and add only one Observation, to shew that it was indeed the third Day according as the People of the Country reckon'd. When Christ talked with the two Disciples who knew him not, they gave him an Account of his own Crucifixion, and their Disappointment; and tell him, *To day is the third Day since these things were done.** Now this Conversation was on the very Day of the Resurrection. And the Disciples thought of nothing less than answering an Objection against the Resurrection, which as yet they did not believe. They recount only a Matter of Fact, and reckon the Time according to the Usage of their Country, and call the Day of the Resurrection *the third Day* from the Crucifixion; which is a plain Evidence, in what manner the *Jews* reckon'd in this and like Cases,

* Luke xxiv. 21.

As the Objections in this Case are founded upon the Story reported by the *Jews*, and the *Roman Soldiers*; Mr. B. in his Answer, endeavour'd to shew from some historical Passages, that the *Jews* themselves did not believe the Story.

His first Argument was, That the *Jews* never question'd the Disciples for this Cheat, and the Share they had in it, when they had them in their Power. And yet who sees not that it was very much to their Purpose so to do? To this there is no Reply.

The second Argument was from the Treatment St. Paul had from King *Agrippa*, and his saying to St. Paul, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*. A Speech, which he reckons cou'd not be made by a Prince, to one concern'd in carrying on a known Cheat. To this the Gentleman replies, That *Agrippa* never did become a Christian, and that no great Stress is to be laid upon his Complaisance to his Prisoner. But allowing that there was something of Humanity and Civility in the Expression, yet such Civility cou'd hardly be paid to a known Impostor. There is a Propriety even in Civility; a Prince may be civil to a Rebel, but he will hardly compliment him for his Loyalty; he may be civil to a poor Sectary, but if he knows him to be a Cheat, he will scarcely compliment him with Hopes that he will be of his Party.

The third Argument was from the Advice given by *Gamaliel* to the Council of the *Jews*, to let the Apostles alone, *for fear they themselves should be found to fight against God*: A Supposition which the Gentleman thinks

thinks absolutely inconsistent with his or the Council's being persuaded, that the Apostles were guilty of any Fraud in managing the Resurrection of Christ.

The Gentleman replies, That *Gamaliel's* Advice respected only the Numbers of People deceived, and was a Declaration of his Opinion, that it was not prudent to come to Extremities till the People were in a better Temper. This deserves Consideration.

First, I observe, that *Gamaliel's* Words are express, *lest ye be found to fight against God*, which Reason respects God, and not the People. And the Supposition is, that the *Hand of God* might possibly be in this Work: A Saying which cou'd not have come from him, or have been received by the Council, if they had believed the Resurrection to have been a Cheat.

Secondly, It is remarkable, that the Miracles wrought by the Apostles after the Death of Christ, those especially which occasioned the calling this Council, had a much greater Effect upon the *Jews*, than even the Miracles of Christ himself. They held out against all the Wonders of Christ, and were perpetually plotting his Death, not doubting but that wou'd put an End to their Trouble: But when after his Death, they saw the same Powers continue with the Apostles, they saw no End of the Affair, but began to think in earnest there might be more in it than they were willing to believe. And upon the Report made to them of the Apostles Works, they make serious Reflexion, *and doubted wherunto this wou'd grow*. And tho'

in their Anger and Vexation of Heart they thought of desperate Remedies, and were for killing the Apostles also, yet they hearkened willingly to *Gamaliel's* Advice, which at another Time might have been dangerous to the Adviser. So that it appears from the History, that the whole Council had the same Doubt that *Gamaliel* had, that possibly the Hand of God might be in this Thing. And cou'd the *Jews*, if they had manifestly discovered the Cheat of the Resurrection a little time before, have entertained such a Suspicion?

The last Period commences at the Resurrection, and takes in the Evidence upon which the Credit of this Fact stands.

The Council for *Woolston*, among other Difficulties, started one, which, if well grounded, excludes all Evidence out of this Case. The Resurrection being a Thing out of the Course of Nature, he thinks the Testimony of Nature, held forth to us in her constant Method of working, a stronger Evidence against the Possibility of a Resurrection, than any human Evidence can be for the Reality of one.

In answer to this, it is said, on the other Side,

First, That a Resurrection is a Thing to be judged of by Mens Senses; and this cannot be doubted. We all know when a Man is dead; and shou'd he come to Life again, we might judge whether he was alive or no, by the very same Means by which we judge those about us to be living Men.

Secondly, That the Notion of a Resurrection contradicts no one Principle of right Reason, interferes with no Law of Nature. And that whoever ad-

mits

mits that God gave Man Life at first, cannot possibly doubt of his Power to restore it when lost.

Thirdly, That appealing to the settled Course of Nature, is referring the Matter in Dispute, not to Rules or Maxims of Reason and true Philosophy, but to the Prejudices and Mistakes of Men; which are various and infinite, and differ sometimes according to the Climate Men live in; because Men form a Notion of Nature from what they see; and therefore in cold Countries all Men judge it to be according to the Course of Nature for Water to freeze, in warm Countries they judge it to be unnatural. Consequently, that it is not enough to prove any Thing to be contrary to the Laws of Nature, to say that it is usually, or constantly, to our Observation, otherwise. And therefore, tho' Men in the ordinary Course die, and do not rise again, (which is certainly a Prejudice against the Belief of a Resurrection) yet is it not an Argument against the Possibility of a Resurrection.

Another Objection was against the Reality of the Body of Christ after it came from the Grave. These Objections are founded upon such Passages as report his appearing or disappearing to the Eyes of his Disciples at pleasure; his coming in among them when the Doors were shut; his forbidding some to touch him, his inviting others to do it; his having the very Wounds whereof he died, fresh and open in his Body, and the like. Hence the Council concluded that it was no real Body, which was sometimes visible, sometimes invisible; some-

times capable of being touched, sometimes incapable.

On the other Side, it was answered, That many of these Objections are founded on a mistaken Sense of the Passages referred to; particularly of the Passage in which Christ is thought to forbid *Mary Magdalen* to touch him; of another, in which he calls to *Thomas* to examine his Wounds; and probably of a third, relating to Christ's Conversation with his Disciples on the Road, without being known by them.

As to other Passages, which relate his appearing and disappearing, and coming in when the Doors were shut, it is said, that no Conclusion can be drawn from them against the Reality of Christ's Body: That these Things might happen many Ways, and yet the Body be real; which is the only Point to which the present Objection extends: That there might be in this, and probably was, something miraculous; but nothing more wonderful than what happened on another Occasion in his Life-time; where the Gentleman who makes the Objection, allows him to have had a real Body.

I mention these Things but briefly, just to bring the Course of the Argument to your Remembrance.

The next Objection is taken from hence, That Christ did not appear publicly to the People, and particularly to the Chief Priests and Rulers of the *Jews*. It is said, that his Commission related to them in an especial manner; and that it appears strange, that the main Proof of his Mission, the

Resurrection, shou'd not be laid before them; but that Witnesses shou'd be picked and culled to see this mighty Wonder. This is the Force of the Objection.

To which it is answer'd, *First*, That the particular Commission to the *Jews* expired at the Death of Christ, and therefore the *Jews* had, on this Account, no Claim for any particular Evidence. And it is insisted, that Christ, before his Death, declared the *Jews* shou'd not see him, till they were better disposed to receive him.

Secondly, That as the whole World had a Concern in the Resurrection of Christ, it was necessary to prepare a proper Evidence for the whole World; which was not to be done by any particular Satisfaction given to the People of the *Jews*, or their Rulers.

Thirdly, That as to the chosen Witnesses, it is a Mistake to think that they were chosen as the only Persons to see Christ after the Resurrection; and that in truth many others did see him; but that the Witnesses were chosen as proper Persons to bear Testimony to all People; an Office to which many others who did see Christ, were not particularly commissioned. That making Choice of proper and credible Witnesses, was so far from being a Ground of just Suspicion, that it is in all Cases the most proper way to exclude Suspicion.

The next Objection is pointed against the Evidence of the Angels, and the Women. It is said, that History reports that the Women saw young Men at the Sepulchre; that they were advanced into Angels merely thro' the Fear and Superstition
of

of the Women: That at the best, this is but a Story of an Apparition; a Thing in Times of Ignorance much talked of, but in the Days of Knowledge never heard of.

In answer to this, it is said, That the Angels are not properly reckoned among the Witnesses of the Resurrection; they were not in the Number of the chosen Witnesses, or sent to bear Testimony in the World: That they were indeed Ministers of God appointed to attend the Resurrection: That God has such Ministers, cannot be reasonably doubted; nor can it be objected that they were improperly employed, or below their Dignity, in attending on the Resurrection of Christ: That we believe them to be Angels, not on the Report of the Women, but upon the Credit of the Evangelist who affirms it. That what is said of Apparitions on this Occasion, may pass for Wit and Ridicule, but yields no Reason or Argument.

The Objection to the Women was, I think, only that they were Women; which was strengthened by calling them silly Women.

It was answered, that Women have Eyes and Ears as well as Men, and can tell what they see and hear. And it happened in this Case, that the Women were so far from being credulous, that they believed not the Angels, and hardly believed their own Report. However that the Women are none of the chosen Witnesses; and if they were, the Evidence of the Men cannot be set aside, because Women saw what they saw.

This is the Substance of the Objections and Answers.

The

The Council for the Apostles insisted further, That they gave the greatest Assurance to the World, that possibly cou'd be given, of their sincere Dealing, by suffering all Kinds of Hardship, and at last Death itself, in Confirmation of the Truth of their Evidence.

The Council for *Woolston*, in Reply to this, told you, That all Religions, whether true or false, have had their Martyrs; that no Opinion, however absurd, can be named, but some have been content to die for it; and then concluded, that Suffering is no Evidence of the Truth of the Opinions for which Men suffer.

To clear this Matter to you, I must observe how this Case stands. You have heard often, in the Course of this Argument, that the Apostles were Witnesses chosen to bear Testimony to the Resurrection; and, for that Reason, had the fullest Evidence themselves of the Truth of it; not merely by seeing Christ once or twice after his Death, but by frequent Conversations with him for forty Days together, before his Ascension. That this was their proper Business, appears plainly from History, where we find, that to ordain an Apostle, was the same thing as *ordaining one to be a Witness of the Resurrection* *. If you look further to the preaching of the Apostles, you will find this was the great Article insisted on †. And St. Paul knew the Weight of this Article, and the Necessity of teaching it, when he said, *If Christ be*

* Acts i. 22.

† Acts ii. 2, 22, &c. iii. 15.

iv. 10. v. 30.

not risen, our Faith is vain. You see then, that the thing which the Apostles testified, and the thing for which they suffered, was the Truth of the Resurrection; which is a mere Matter of Fact.

Consider now how the Objection stands. The Council for *Woolston* tells you, that 'tis common for Men to die for false Opinions; and he tells you nothing but the Truth. But even in those Cases their suffering is an Evidence of their Sincerity; and it wou'd be very hard to charge Men who die for the Doctrine they profess, with Insincerity in the Profession. Mistaken they may be; but every mistaken Man is not a Cheat. Now if you will allow the Suffering of the Apostles to prove their Sincerity, which you cannot well disallow; and consider that they died for the Truth of a Matter of Fact which they had seen themselves, you will perceive how strong the Evidence is in this Case. In Doctrines and Matters of Opinion, Men mistake perpetually; and it is no Reason for me to take up with another Man's Opinion, because I am persuaded he is sincere in it. But when a Man reports to me an uncommon Fact, yet such an one, as in its own Nature is a plain Object of Sense; if I believe him not, it is not because I suspect his Eyes, or his Sense of Feeling, but merely because I suspect his Sincerity. For if I was to see the same thing myself, I should believe myself; and therefore my Suspicion does not arise from the Inability of human Senses to judge in the Case, but from a Doubt of the Sincerity of the Reporter. In such Cases therefore there wants nothing to be proved,

proved, but only the Sincerity of the Reporter; and since voluntary Suffering for the Truth, is at least a Proof of Sincerity; the Sufferings of the Apostles for the Truth of the Resurrection, is a full and unexceptionable Proof.

The Council for *Woolston* was sensible of this Difference, and therefore he added, that there are many Instances of Mens suffering and dying in an obstinate Denial of the Truth of Facts plainly proved. This Observation is also true. I remember a Story of a Man who endured with great Constancy all the Tortures of the Rack, denying the Fact with which he was charged. When he was asked afterwards, how he could hold out against all the Tortures? He answered, I had painted a Gallows upon the Toe of my Shoe, and when the Rack stretched me, I looked on the Gallows, and bore the Pain, to save my Life. This Man denied a plain Fact, under great Torture, but you see a Reason for it. In other Cases, when Criminals persist in denying their Crimes, they often do it, and there is Reason to suspect they do it always, in Hopes of a Pardon or Reprieve. But what are these Instances to the present purpose? All these Men suffer against their Will, and for their Crimes; and their Obstinacy is built on the Hope of escaping, by moving the Compassion of the Government. Can the Gentleman give any Instances of Persons who died willingly in Attestation of a false Fact? We have had in *England* some weak enough to die for the Pope's Supremacy; but do you think

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a Man

a Man could be found to die in Proof of the Pope's being actually on the Throne of *England*.

Now the Apostles died in asserting the Truth of Christ's Resurrection. It was always in their Power to quit their Evidence, and save their Lives. Even their bitterest Enemies, the *Jews*, required no more of them than to be silent.* Others have denied Facts, or asserted Facts, in hopes of saving their Lives, when they were under Sentence of Death: But these Men attested a Fact at the expence of their Lives, which they might have saved by denying the Truth. So that between Criminals dying and denying plain Facts, and the Apostles dying for their Testimony, there is this material Difference: Criminals deny the Truth in hopes of saving their Lives; the Apostles willingly parted with their Lives, rather than deny the Truth.

We are come now to the last, and indeed the most weighty Consideration.

The Council for the Apostles having in the Course of the Argument allowed, that more Evidence is required to support the Credit of the Resurrection, it being a very extraordinary Event, than is necessary in common Cases; in the latter Part of his Defence sets forth the extraordinary Evidence upon which this Fact stands. This is the Evidence of the Spirit; the Spirit of Wisdom and Power, which was given to the Apostles, to enable them to confirm their Testimony by Signs and Wonders, and mighty Works. This Part of

* Acts iv. 17. v. 28.

the Argument was well argued by the Gentleman, and I need not repeat all he said.

The Council for *Woolston* in his Reply, made two Objections to this Evidence.

The first was this; That the Resurrection having all along been pleaded to be a Matter of Fact and an Object of Sense; to recur to Miracles for the Proof of it, is to take it out of its proper Evidence, the Evidence of Sense; and to rest it upon a Proof which cannot be applied to it; for seeing one Miracle, he says, is no Evidence that another Miracle was wrought before it; as healing a sick Man, is no Evidence that a dead Man was raised to Life.

To clear this Difficulty, you must consider by what Train of Reasoning Miracles come to be Proofs in any Case. A Miracle of itself proves nothing, unless this only, that there is a Cause equal to the producing the Effect we see. Suppose you shou'd see a Man raise one from the dead, and he shou'd go away and say nothing to you, you wou'd not find that any Fact, or any Proposition, was prov'd or disprov'd by this Miracle. But shou'd he declare to you, in the Name of him, by whose Power the Miracle was wrought, that Image-Worship was unlawful, you wou'd then be possess'd of a Proof against Image-Worship. But how? Not because the Miracle proves any thing, as to the Point itself; but because the Man's Declaration is authorized by him who wrought the Miracle in Confirmation of his Doctrine. And therefore Miracles are directly a Proof of the

Authority of Persons, and not of the Truth of Things.

To apply this to the present Case: If the Apostles had wrought Miracles, and said nothing of the Resurrection, the Miracles would have proved nothing about the Resurrection, one way or other. But when as Eye-witnesses they attested the Truth of the Resurrection, and wrought Miracles to confirm their Authority; the Miracles did not directly prove the Resurrection; but they confirmed and establish'd beyond all Suspicion the proper Evidence, the Evidence of Eye-witnesses. So that here is no Change of the Evidence from proper to improper; the Fact still rests upon the Evidence of Sense, confirmed and strengthen'd by the Authority of the Spirit. If a Witness calls in his Neighbours to attest his Veracity, they prove nothing as to the Fact in question, but only confirm the Evidence of the Witness. The Case here is the same; tho' between the Authorities brought in Confirmation of the Evidence, there is no Comparison.

The second Objection was, That this Evidence, however good it may be in its kind, is yet nothing to us. It was well, the Gentleman says, for those who had it; but what is that to us, who have it not?

To adjust this Difficulty, I must observe to you, that the Evidence, now under Consideration, was not a private Evidence of the Spirit, or any inward Light, like to that which the Quakers in our Time pretend to; but an Evidence appearing in the manifest and visible Works of the Spirit: And

this Evidence was capable of being transmitted, and actually has been transmitted to us upon unquestionable Authority: And to allow the Evidence to have been good in the first Ages, and not in this, seems to me to be a Contradiction to the Rules of Reasoning. For if we see enough to judge that the first Ages had Reason to believe, we must needs see at the same time, that it is reasonable for us also to believe. As the present Question only relates to the Nature of the Evidence, it was not necessary to produce from History the Instances to shew in how plentiful a manner this Evidence was granted to the Church. Whoever wants this Satisfaction, may easily have it.

Gentlemen of the Jury, I have laid before you the Substance of what has been said on both Sides. You are now to consider of it, and to give your Verdict.

The Jury consulted together, and the Foreman rose up.

Foreman. My Lord, We are ready to give our Verdict.

Judge. Are you all agreed?

Jury. Yes.

Judge. Who shall speak for you?

Jury. Our Foreman.

Judge. What say you? Are the Apostles guilty of giving false Evidence in the Case of the Resurrection of Jesus, or not guilty?

Foreman. Not guilty.

Judge.

Judge. Very well; and now, Gentlemen, I resign my Commission, and am your humble Servant.

The Company rose up, and were beginning to pay their Compliments to the Judge and the Council; but were interrupted by a Gentleman, who went up to the Judge, and offer'd him a Fee. What's this? says the Judge. A Fee, Sir, said the Gentleman. A Fee to a Judge is a Bribe, said the Judge. True, Sir, said the Gentleman; but you have resign'd your Commission, and will not be the first Judge who has come from the Bench to the Bar without any Diminution of Honour. Now *Lazarus's* Case is to come on next, and this Fee is to retain you on his Side. There follow'd a confus'd Noise of all speaking together, to persuade the Judge to take the Fee: But as the Trial had lasted longer than I expected, and I had lapsed the time of an Appointment for Business, I was forc'd to slip away; and whether the Judge was prevail'd on to undertake the Cause of *Lazarus*, or no, I cannot say.

F I N I S.





A

DEFENCE

OF THE

Scripture-History

So far as it concerns

The *RESURRECTION* of JAIRUS'S
Daughter; the Widow of NAIN'S
Son; and LAZARUS.

In Answer

To Mr. WOOLSTON'S Fifth Discourse
on our *Saviour's Miracles*.

WITH

A PREFACE, containing some REMARKS
on his ANSWER to the Lord Bishop of
St. David's.

Henry Stebbing

*This is the Disciple which testifieth of these things,
and wrote these things; and we know that his
Testimony is true. JOHN XXI. 24.*

L O N D O N :

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T H E
P R E F A C E.



THE Controversy with Mr. Woolston on the Subject of our Saviour's Miracles, having been already undertaken by a very Eminent Hand; any Interposition from a private Writer, may look like Presumption.*

His Lordship, I am persuaded, will be so far from taking offence, that he will be pleased, on this occasion, to see the proper Evidences of a Concern for the common Faith, from what Quarter soever they come; and will not think it a Disparagement to his Undertaking if it be presumed, that Performances of a great deal less account than his own, may have their use. Mr. W. has in all his late Writings shewn a great Contempt of the Clergy; and had this been all, it might and would have been borne with. But when the Question comes to affect the Truth of the Gospel, it is every Man's Right, and every Man's Duty, to consider his Objections, and to offer his Thoughts to the Publick, so far as he thinks himself capable of advancing any thing, which may help to set these Matters in a true and proper Light.

It is grown to be so fashionable a thing for every Writer both in Divinity and in Politicks, to assume

* Bp. of St. David's.

to himself an unbounded Licence to write what he pleases, that I marvel not that this Gentleman, who had so many offensive things to say, should flee to the common Refuge in such Cases, and be very angry at those who should suggest, that the Magistrate has any right to interpose in such Questions as these. I will have no dispute with Mr. W. upon this Point, which lies at present before other Judges. If you will believe him in what he often says, Reason and Argument is all he wants: tho' if you will judge from what he writes, he means nothing less; of which, setting aside his ludicrous way of treating the most serious things, (which is choquing to all who do not come to the reading of his Books with the same Spirit with which he wrote them) this is sufficient Proof, that he has never yet vouchsafed a proper Answer to any one *Writer* who has appeared against him, nor, so far as we can judge at present, ever intends to do it. In his last Piece, which is professedly written against the Bishop of St. David's, he amuses his Readers with general Harangues, and Digressions into Subjects which have no relation to the main Controversy; but enters into no Point, nor (as he himself confesses) so much as attempts * to defend himself on any one Miracle. Since this is the Case, the World, I suppose, will readily acquit his Lordship, if he should never think it worth his while to enter into the Particulars of it. But the Reason he gives for not defending himself is well worth notice, namely, that as he cannot do this without writing in the same Style and Strain for which he is prosecuted, so he will do nothing that may be interpreted as an Act in Defiance and Contempt of the Power of the Civil Magistrate; which is so sorry a Pretence, that, I think, even Mr. W. himself could

* Defence, part 1. p. 51.

not hope that it should pass with the most unwary Reader. He is prosecuted, he tells us, for the Style and Strain of his Writings, that is, I suppose, for burlesquing and ridiculing the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour. Now because, it seems, whenever he undertakes his own Defence, he cannot do it without writing in the same Style and Strain, therefore he declines it for the present, lest it should be interpreted as an Act of Defiance to Civil Authority. Who does not see here that Mr. W. prevaricates? He takes notice himself, that he published two Discourses after the Commencement of the Prosecution, which all the World knows are written in the same Style and Strain; and if any one can be so weak as to believe him in what he says in excuse for it, namely, that he thought his Prosecutors were in jest, yet, now at least, he seems convinced that they are in earnest. And yet in this very Book he writes in the same Style and Strain as before, or worse, if it were possible; and declares, that if he survives the Prosecution, and escapes with Life and Liberty, he will go on to do so, in spite of any Discouragement that our Laws can give; which plainly shews, that, not a Regard to Civil Authority is the true Reason of his declining to enter into the Defence of his Cause, but something else which was not to be spoke out. Surely Mr. W. might have thought it as safe to have answered the Bishop of St. David's, and the rest of his Opposers, if he could have done it, as to go on in abusing them; nor need he have fear'd a more heavy Sentence for offering a just and a reasonable Apology for himself, if he knew that he had a just Apology to offer. I confess there are a great many of the Opinion, that he deserves chastisement for his Ill-manners; but I hope there are very few who would have him se-

verely treated merely for his Infidelity: and under what odious Colours soever he may think fit to represent the English Clergy, I will answer for some of them, that they are not afraid to follow him to the very bottom of this Question, whenever he has any thing to offer that is fit for a Christian to hear.

It is amazing to consider with how much Confidence this Writer challenges all the World to a Dispute, in which the Whole of Religion lies at stake, whilst, at the same time, he gives the strongest Intimations possible, that he never means to enter into this Point with the Spirit and Conduct of a sober Inquirer after Truth. He tells us, that * if our Bishops were any thing Heroical, they would stop the Prosecution, and let the Controversy take its free course. How much it may be in the power of any of our Bishops to put a stop to this Prosecution, I do not know, nor do I think it material to enquire. But why must the Prosecution be stoppt? Why, if the Gentleman has any honest meaning, he must say, that there may be room for free Debate, and that the Arguments on both sides may be fairly considered. Very well. And does Mr. W. mean to undertake the part of a fair Disputant, in case this Liberty should be granted him? By no means; for you have already seen that he CANNOT write but in the same Style and Strain; and at the Close of his Book he says plainly, that † notwithstanding what the Bishop has written in Vindication of Jesus's Miracles, the literal Story of them, by the leave of God and of the Civil Magistrate, shall be afresh attack'd, and perhaps with MORE RIDICULE than he used before. Reason is one thing; Ridicule is another: So that what the Gentleman modestly

* P. 52.

† P. 69.

wishes for is this, 'that the Civil Magistrate would sit by to hear, not whether Mr. W. is able to justify himself by Reason, but whether he has Wit enough to laugh Religion out of countenance. If this be the Magistrate's Province, I think he has very little to do. But Mr. W. should be put in mind, that his Cause gains no credit by trusting to such Artifices as these. Whatever his Doubts may be, there is certainly a way of proposing them to the Publick, that is consistent with Decency and good Sense; and since he, it seems, is under so unhappy a Fatality, that he CANNOT write inoffensively, he should be taught the Discretion to leave the Dispute to somebody that can. But his unwillingness to do it, can, in my apprehension, proceed from nothing else than a secret Conviction, that his Cause will not stand a fair Tryal.

If Mr. W. had been under any Inclination to do justice to the Argument he has enter'd upon, there were several Treatises previous to the Bishop of St. David's, which he would certainly have thought worth his notice. Among the rest I will take leave to mention, in the first place, The Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus; a Treatise which has gain'd an universal esteem amongst all who read with Understanding. To what hand soever it is that the Publick is obliged for this judicious Performance, he has certainly all the Qualifications of a fair Adversary. Here is no crying out to the Civil Magistrate for help: none of those Calumnys and Slanders which Mr. W. so loudly, and so unreasonably complains of. Here is Argument for him, and nothing but Argument, in which there is this Circumstance that must recommend it to Mr. W. as it does to every body else, that the Objections on the side of Infidelity are set in a much stronger Light than that Gentleman knew

*knew how to put them himself. And yet this Book, though published many Months ago, very soon after his sixth Discourse made its appearance, has lain by neglected, and not one Word of notice taken of it till now!—And what does Mr. W. say to it now? Why, that * the Author of this Treatise is a Friend to his Objections against Jesus's Resurrection, which he has fairly stated, but is so far from fully confuting ALL of them, that he discovers a Consciousness here and there that they are unanswerable. By the way, here is a pretty plain Confession, that there are SOME of his Objections which the Author of this Treatise has fully confuted; and it would have been some Satisfaction if Mr. W. would have told us which they are, in his Opinion, that he has not fully confuted. But this is of no great consequence; because, upon the whole, he tells us, that there is very little in this Treatise to make it reputed a sufficient Answer to his Objections, excepting the Verdict of the Jury. Is it not visible to the whole World, that this Writer disdains to debate the Question fairly with any body, and means to support his Cause merely by dint of Assurance? Has he written one single Page to shew that there is any appearance of Truth in what he says? Not one. Has he so much as referr'd his Readers to the particular Passages in that Treatise, where the Author has discovered this Consciousness, that his Objections are unanswerable? Nor this, nor any thing has he said to shew, that he ever intends it. He tells us indeed of † a Vindication which he once drew up, and which he still hopes for an Opportunity to publish, at some time or other. And what is he to prove in this Vindication? Why, it seems, that Bishop Sherlock is not the Author of this Treatise.*

* P. 59.

† P. 61.

What is it, Sir, to you, or to your Cause, who is the Author of this Treatise? If I should prove, that Mr. W. is not the Author of the Books lately published under his Name, but that somebody wrote them for him, what am I the nearer? The Objections will be just the same, neither better nor worse. And so will the Answers to these Objections be, whether Bishop Sherlock wrote them or not. No doubt if Mr. W. could have proved the Author of this Treatise to be of his side, he would have done it long before now, as knowing that it would have been more to his purpose, than finding fault with Dedications: And in that case 'tis natural to suppose, that he would have been glad that the World should believe that Author to be Bishop Sherlock, that the greatness of his Name might add glory to his Triumphs. But he knows he falsify, and his Cowardise betrays him. If he denies it, it will be expected that he gives a reason for it, by shewing that this Writer has not answered his Objections. Whenever he will undertake this Point, whether fairly or unfairly, somebody will be at leisure to see how well he performs it; to which Mr. W. has this Encouragement, that if he gets the better in this Debate, and can once prove the Resurrection of our Saviour to be a Cheat, no body will think it worth the while to dispute the rest with him.

*Mr. W's Neglect of so considerable a Writer will appear so much the more deserving our notice, when 'tis remembred how he has improved the Silence of the Clergy, upon the Publication of his first Discourse, into a matter of boasting. * I have given them (says he) time enough to make a Reply, if they had been of Ability to do it. What must I then think upon their Silence? Nothing less than that my Cause is impregnable, and my Arguments*

* Disc. 2. p. 2.

and Authoritys in defence of it irrefragable.—
The World is by this time, I hope, convinced, that Mr. W. was greatly mistaken, and may be more so in due time. What I mention this for, is only to shew, that if we may be permitted to judge of Mr. W. by the same Rule that he judges of others, he stands condemned. For he has not answered this Book, nor (as it appears) ever means to answer it.

There is another nameless Writer mentioned by Mr. W. as a Writer of some Credit, whom, like a courageous Champion (as he speaks) he looks in the Face; but, like a Coward, presently turns his Back upon. It is the Author of three small Tracts, entituled, The Miracles of Jesus vindicated. This Gentleman has, in a very short and plain manner, answered Mr. W's Objections to several of our Saviour's Miracles, for which he deserves Thanks. Instead of shewing the Insufficiency of these Answers, Mr. W. is pleased to entertain his Readers with an account of some Chit-chat that his Friend the Rabbi had with him over a Dish of Tea, concerning one of these Treatises, and declares, that if he † could have gotten to the certain Knowledge of the Author, he should have been tempted to have had a Bout with him. Go on, Sir, I beseech you. What is it that hinders? If you cannot find the Man, you can find his Books, which is all you want, unless your Design is personally to affront him: And doubtless this is what Mr. W. means when he says, that if he could find him out he would teach him a better Use, and a more proper Application of the words DISHONESTY, and WANT OF HONESTY, than to reproach him with them. This Writer, you must know, has charged Mr. W. with quoting the Fathers dishonestly. If he can answer this Charge, why does he not do it? Let Shame*

rest where it will, he will remove it from himself. If he cannot, he will gain no advantage from the knowledge of the Author, which will not help to make his Case worse. So that this is plainly a Shift to avoid engaging in a Point which he finds too hot for his handling. I do not wonder that any Gentleman should chuse to conceal his Name in this Controversy, as it stands at present, rather than expose himself to the Outrages of a petulant Writer, who knows not how to contain himself within any bounds of Decency. It is needless to exemplify in what sort he has used the Bishops of the Church, and especially the Bishop of St. David's, in this his last Book; for which the best Excuse he has to offer is this, that* if a Lord will engage with a Plowman, and should meet with a Kick on the Shins, he should know how to bear it with patience. If Mr. W. is willing to have it said that he has the Wit and the Manners of a Plowman; I shall readily acknowledge the Comparison to be very just. As to the Bishop, he, I dare say, knows how to bear the Treatment he has met with from Mr. W. with patience; and so much the rather when he observes, that even MAJESTY ITSELF has not been suffered to escape the Scourges of his insolent Pen.

I could readily have join'd with Mr. W. in his Request to the excellent Author of the Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of JESUS, "that he
 " would publish, what in the Conclusion he has given
 " us some hopes of, The Tryal of the Witnesses
 " of the Resurrection of LAZARUS †:" But till that comes, if ever it is to come, I hope this Essay will be accepted, in which I have joined that Case, and the other two Resurrection-Miracles recorded in the New Testament, together. I have all along, in this Work, consider'd Mr. W. as an Infidel, by

* P. 68.

† P. 61.

which I am sensible I have drawn upon myself, a Charge of Slander ; for this is the great and only Fault of all his Adversarys, which has occasioned so much Complaint on his side, that they will not allow him to be a Christian. But if Mr. W. will be angry, I cannot help it : for surely great is his Madness or his Confidence in pretending to be a Christian, when he saps the very Foundation, without which it will be impossible ever to shew, that Jesus was a Prophet sent from God. If Mr. W. is of another Opinion, it would be a great Satisfaction to the Publick to see a Specimen from him, shewing how an Infidel may be converted upon his Principles.

As to the Matter of this Book, I have confined myself wholly to the clearing up the Scripture-History, leaving that part of the Dispute which concerns the Sense of the Fathers, to others who have more time to spare. Why I set not my Name to this Treatise, Mr. W. has no right to demand an account. I have made use of my Liberty, and let him make use of his. If he gives no Answer, I shall think the Gospel thus far justified. If otherwise, whether he sets himself to reason or to rail, to laugh or to be serious ; my business shall be, as he advises, to take all with patience, and, stripping him of every false Ornament that may help to disguise the Truth, and lead the Reader off from the Point in question, to set him forth naked to the World.





A
 DEFENCE
 OF THE
 SCRIPTURE-HISTORY, &c.

MY Purpose is to consider those three Miracles of our Saviour which Mr. *Woolston* has thrown together in his fifth Discourse, viz. The Resurrection of *Lazarus*, of *Jairus's* Daughter and the *Widow of Nain's* Son; in which that we may proceed in some Method, there are two Things principally to be attended to as general Heads comprehending, I think, all his Objections, viz.

First, What Appearance these Facts have upon the Face of the Scripture-History.

Secondly, What is the Evidence upon which we believe the Scripture-History to be true,

B

and

and what are the Exceptions which this Writer has produced against it.

First then ; let us consider what Appearance these Facts have upon the Face of the Scripture-History ; and particularly, *whether in the Account of these Facts, as they stand recorded by the Evangelists, there appears any such Improbabilitys, Incredibilitys, or Absurditys as may justly render them Suspicious?* Our Author is very copious in declaiming upon this Head, insomuch that were any one disposed to frame an Idea of the New Testament from his general Representations of it, he must conclude it to be one continu'd Chain of Inconsistencys. What Ground there is for all this Outcry will soon appear, when the Particulars of the Charge come to be laid before you. In order to it, take the History of these three Cases in short as follow.

“ *Jairus* a Man of Note among the *Jews*,
 “ having heard of the Fame of *Jesus* as a
 “ Worker of Miracles, comes to him, and
 “ with great Earnestness desires him to go and
 “ heal his Daughter, who was at the point of
 “ Death. Soon after, there comes a Messenger,
 “ acquainting him that she was actually dead.
 “ *Jesus* nevertheless goes to the Ruler's House,
 “ where he finds the *Minstrels*, and the whole
 “ Family making great Lamentation. Here-
 “ upon taking with him *Peter*, and *James*, and
 “ *John*, and the Father and Mother of the
 “ Damself, he enters the Room where she was
 “ laid,

“ laid, and taking her by the Hand said,
 “ *Damsel arise*; and she arose and walked.
 “ *Matt. ix. 18. Mark. v. 22. Luke viii. 41.*

“ The *second* History acquaints us that *Jesus*
 “ going to a City called *Nain*, attended with
 “ his Disciples and much People; he met at
 “ the Gate of the City, a young Man (the
 “ only Son of a Widow Woman) a carrying
 “ to his Grave. Moved with Compassion he
 “ came and touched the Bier, and said *Young*
 “ *Man arise*. And he that was dead sat up
 “ and began to speak, and he delivered him
 “ to his Mother. *Luke vii. 11.*

“ The *third* and last is to this effect. *Lazarus*
 “ of *Bethany*, the Friend of *Jesus*, was
 “ sick; of which he is presently acquainted by
 “ *Mary* and *Martha* the Sisters of *Lazarus*.
 “ After two Days he prepares to go and visit
 “ him, and by the way tells his Disciples plain-
 “ ly that *Lazarus* was dead, signifying to them
 “ his Intentions of raising him from the dead.
 “ When they came to *Bethany*, they found
 “ that he had been four Days laid in the Grave.
 “ Whereupon *Jesus* attended with his Disci-
 “ ples, and *Mary* and *Martha*, and many o-
 “ ther *Jews*, goes to the Grave, and having or-
 “ der'd the Stone to be taken away, cried with
 “ a loud Voice, *Lazarus come forth*. And he
 “ that was dead came forth with Grave Clothes,
 “ and his Face was bound about with a Nap-
 “ kin. And *Jesus* saith unto them—Loose him
 “ and let him go. *Job. xi. 1—47.*

I think I have omitted no one material Point in writing these Stories; which at first View seem to be very plain, consistent Narratives, containing nothing of Absurdity or Incredibility, unless any one thinks it to be an incredible thing that God should be able to raise a dead Man to life. But let us hear what this Writer has to except against them. His Objections, (such of them, I mean, as properly fall under the present Enquiry) are in number five; whereof three have a general and common Reference to all the Cases above mentioned; and two are peculiar to the Case of *Lazarus*.

The Objections common to all the Cases are these *viz.* * 1. That none of these three Persons said to be raised from the dead, *were at all proper Persons for Jesus to work such a Miracle upon in Testimony of his divine Power*, *Jairus's Daughter*, it seems, *was an insignificant Girl*. The *Widow's Son* a Youth of no greater Importance. *Lazarus*, something more considerable as he was *Jesus's Friend*; but not so proper a Subject by a great deal as *John the Baptist* or many other Persons, whom this Writer, if he had been advised with, could have recommended for this purpose. 2. That neither sacred nor ecclesiastical History *† make any mention what became of these three Persons after their Resurrection; how long they lived; or of what*

* P. 20, to 27.

† P. 15, to 20.

Use and Advantage their restored Lives were to the Church, or to Mankind. 3. That * *none of these three Persons did or could after the Return of their Souls to their Bodies tell any Tales of their separate Existence.* If this Writer had not been under very strong Inclinations to depreciate the holy Scriptures, he would never have imagined that a Charge of Absurdity could be supported by such wretched Cavils as these. He very rightly observes, that the End our Saviour proposed in working these Miracles, was to give *Testimony of his divine Power.* I desire then that it may be explained why the raising of these Persons from the dead, was not as good an Evidence of the Power of God, as the raising of any other Persons would have been? Or of what Consequence it is to the setting forth our Saviour's divine Power, to be told, how it fared with these Persons when they were dead; where they dwelt; and what they did after they were again restored to Life? That *Jesus ought to have raised all that died wherever he came,* our Writer owns *cannot be supposed.* *Two or three Instances,* says he, *will be allowed to be sufficient.* Here are now three for his purpose; yet they will not satisfy: And why? why because *Jesus* did not think fit to raise just such Persons as he would have him to have raised; *an useful Magistrate,* for instance; or

an industrious Merchant ; or a Father of a numerous Family ; or some other Person of consequence to the Commonwealth. How does the Gentleman know of what consequence these Persons were, or were not, to the Commonwealth? Or what has the Commonwealth to do in such Questions as these? Insignificant as these Persons were upon other accounts, they are Instances, I say, of the Power of God ; and how wise soever this Writer may imagine himself to be, we have certainly a right to suppose that God is wiser, and that it belonged to him, and not to any Mortal upon Earth, to determine upon whom it was proper to exercise this Power, so as best to answer the Ends of his Providence. Nor let him be disturbed as if it were an Absurdity, that a Person should be raised from the dead and make no Discoveries *to his Friends and Acquaintance* about the other World. For aught that he can shew to the contrary, these Persons did tell their Friends and Acquaintance all that they knew of it themselves. But if (which is most likely) they themselves knew nothing, it is very certain that they could tell nothing. The Notion of Death implies no more than the Separation of Soul and Body : And by the Will of God, the Soul may subsist for a time, in a state of Insensibility out of the Body, as well as it may in the Body. But how, (he will ask) can it reasonably be supposed to have been the Will of God, that these Persons should know

know nothing of a separate State? Would not *a Report* of the Condition of departed Souls, from those, who for a time had had the Experience of it, *have been a Confirmation of that Doctrine, which is of the Essence of our Religion, and an absolute Confutation of the Sadduces and Sceptists of that Age, and of the Materialists in this?* I much doubt, whether it would or not. For it is a very hard matter to know what will *absolutely confute* (in their own Opinions, I mean) those who are aforehand determined not to believe. In my Apprehension, the Evidence of a future State upon the foot it now stands, is as good as it needs to be; and I am not sure whether if *Lazarus* had known, and *St. John* had particularly related, as from him, what was the State of the Dead; I am not sure, I say, that this Writer himself would have believed it one jot the sooner. But it is not worth while to dispute this Point with him. Let the Advantage of the Evidence for a future State be as great upon this Supposition as he is pleased to have it: I ask him this plain Question; Can he prove that God was bound to give such Evidence? Or can he even shew, that upon some accounts, it would not have been inconsistent with the Wisdom of his Providence, to have given such Evidence? Till he can do this, he has no right to suppose that these dead Persons knew any thing at all of a separate State, or, if they did know any thing, were permitted to declare

declare any thing. The Silence of the sacred History, as to this matter, is therefore ridiculously alledged as an argument against the Credibility of these Relations. For how absurd is it to bring these Objections against these particular Parts of the Gospel-History, which, if they have any weight at all in them, it must fall directly upon the Gospel itself, whether literally or mystically understood. For since Christ came to teach us all things necessary to Religion, how will you account for his silence in these Points? Was not there more reason to expect a distinct account of the other World from Christ himself, than from the Daughter of *Jairus*, the Son of the *Widow*, or from *Lazarus*?

But the Writer objects farther; Why have we no Accounts, what became of these Persons after they were raised from the Dead? The reason is plain. The Evangelists wrote the History of Christ, and not of these Persons; and therefore they take notice of them as far as Christ was concerned with them, but had no cause to enter into their particular Story. To prove the Miracle, they relate particularly the Circumstances of their Death, and particularly also the Circumstances of their being raised to Life, what more would you have? If you had the minutest Account of their Affairs afterwards, the Miracle would stand as it does, neither diminished nor augmented by the History: And
is

is it reasonable to expect from the Evangelists, that they should write every person's Life on whom Christ wrought a Cure? They must, I think, have wrote more Lives than ever *Plutarch* did; and the Gospel intended to instruct the World in Religion, would have made a very odd Figure so filled with private Adventures. As to the Silence of the Ecclesiastical Historians in these Cases, 'tis evident, that they came too late to give us any such Account, since the Gospel had given them no Light, and the Persons were not so considerable as to have particular Historians of their own Time.

Wherefore, to proceed to the other two Objections proper to be spoken to under this Head of Enquiry; which, as I said just now, are peculiar to the Case of *Lazarus*. Our Author has treated this Relation in a very singular manner, and introduces it by a Preface, in which he represents it as * *such a Contexture of Folly and Fraud, as is not to be equall'd in all Romantick History*. This naturally raises an Expectation of some great Discoveries; and what are they? Why, 1. *Jesus is said to have WEPT and GROANED for the Death of Lazarus, whom he had beforehand determined to raise from the dead!* 2. *Jesus call'd Lazarus forth with a LOUD Voice; as if dead Lazarus had been deader than Jairus's Daughter, or the Widow's Son!* If these, and such as

* P. 38.

these be the Absurditys and Incredibilitys the Gentleman talks of, he may with great Ease fill a Volume, but with very little advantage to his Cause. For where is the Absurdity, where is the Incredibility, that even *Jesus* should on this occasion discover in himself the tender, that is the most amiable Part of human Nature ; or that he should speak loud enough to be heard by all the People that stood by, who were to be Witnesses of the Power of his Word in raising the Dead to Life? That which drew Tears from the blessed *Jesus* was not the Death of *Lazarus*, as appears from his own Words to his Disciples : *Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes*, Joh. xi. 14, 15. And when *Martha* met him, and said, *Lord, if thou hadst been here my Brother had not died* ; he answers without any concern, *Thy Brother shall rise again*, ver. 21, 23. But when he was going to the Grave where his Friend was laid, and saw Sorrow and Distress in the Faces of all around him ; it was then that he first felt those Impressions of Tenderness, which, without any reproach to us from our Reason, are wont to lead us to sympathize with the Afflicted. And had this Writer been by, to have demanded the reason of his Tears, he might have answered in the Words of a Roman Poet ; *Homo sum, & nihil Humani à me alienum puto.*

It would be no groundless Conjecture if I should say, that one cause of our Saviour's concern

cern was that slowness of Belief which he observed in those, who had afore been often Witnesses of his Almighty Power ; of which this will not be the single Instance that is to be found in Scripture. The *Jews* openly reviled him, and said, *Could not this Man which opened the Eyes of the Blind, have caused that even this Man should not have died ?* Upon which it presently follows, *Jesus* THEREFORE again groaning in himself cometh to the Grave. And even she who could say with so much assurance, *I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee ;* seems in that Confession to have out-run her real Persuasion. For when *Jesus* said, *Take away the Stone,* she checks him with a Speech full of distrust, *Lord by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.* But why should I tire you with such common Observations ? What if we cannot tell the reason why *Jesus* wept, nor answer to those who shall ask us, why in the Case of *Lazarus* he spake with a loud Voice ? why in the Case of the Widow's Son he touched the Bier ? why in the Case of *Jairus's* Daughter he took hold of her Hand ? Is it necessary, in order to support the Credit of the History, that we account distinctly for such minute, and perhaps arbitrary Circumstances of our Saviour's Behaviour ? Can even this Writer imagine, that the Truth of the Gospel depends upon the Tone of our Saviour's Voice, whether it was soft or loud ; upon the

Motion of his Hand, whether it was to the right or to the left? or would such Questions as these be borne in any other Case? If all Histories are to be tried by this Rule, they must all be given up as Romances; for all are liable to the like Objections.

From the Account then of these three Facts, as they stand recorded by the Evangelists, there is no appearance of any such Absurdity as this Writer complains of, and which may justly render them suspicious. Another Enquiry proper to be made, is, *Whether in the relation of these Facts there are any Circumstances WANTING, which are necessary to render them full and sufficient Proofs of what they were intended to shew, to wit, our Saviour's Power in raising the Dead to life?* And a very material Defect there is, if what this Writer objects be true; viz. * *That none of these three raised Persons had been dead LONG ENOUGH to amputate* (as he learnedly expresses himself) *all doubt of Jesus's miraculous Power in their Resurrection.* His Meaning I presume is, that these Persons were not dead long enough *in appearance* to shew that they were *really* dead: For admitting that they were really dead, it must be granted that *Jesus* raised them from the dead; because it is not pretended that these Persons were not alive after they were supposed to have been dead. The only Point therefore to

* P. 26.

be considered is, what Circumstances there are in the Story to shew that these Persons were really dead? That they were all of them treated by their Friends and Relations as dead Persons, is evident and incontestable. For when *Jesus* came to *Jairus's* House, he found the *Minstrels* there, and the People making great Lamentation. The *Widow's* Son was carrying to his Grave; and *Lazarus* had been actually buried several Days. But the Question still is, whether in these Cases there was not either Mistake or Fraud? The Objector puts in for both Pleas as he thinks will best serve his turn; but every one of common Sense must see, that in one and the same Case both Pleas cannot stand together. Let us therefore take them separately; and first as to the supposed Mistake; why should any one treat his Child or his Relation as a dead Person, unless he knows him to be so? Is there any Sense in believing, that those about *Jairus's* Daughter would have called in the *Minstrels*, and made such ado; or that the *Widow* should have suffered her only Son to be carried forth as a Corpse; or *Martha*, and *Mary*, their Brother to be buried, if there had not been in all these Cases all the Evidence of Death that Reason and Sense could give? To what purpose then is it to alledge, that these Persons *were not dead long enough*? If they were dead long enough for the Conviction of the Parents or Friends that they were dead, they
were

were dead long enough for the Evidence of the Miracle ; and this the Story shews, or it shews nothing. But, because this is a Difficulty at every turn to be thrown in our way, I wish we had been told *how long* it is necessary that a Person should be dead, or seemingly dead, before we may reasonably venture to pronounce him dead. The Objector himself seems to be under some Uncertainty in this matter. In the Case of *Jairus's Daughter*, he says, that *she ought to have been some Days, IF NOT Weeks, dead and buried*. But in the Case of the *Widow's Son*, he is very positive that he *ought to have been buried two or three Weeks*. Why *buried*, I beseech you? Is there no knowing that a Person is dead till he has lain some time in the Earth? Are not the proper Evidences of Death always supposed as antecedent to Burial? And will not a few Hours (or Days at most) determine this Evidence to all reasonable Satisfaction? Why no, says the Objector ; for * *History and common Fame affords Instances of the mistaken Deaths of Persons who sometimes have been unfortunately buried alive ; and at other times happily restored to Life*. Allowing him as many Instances of this kind as he can have the conscience to ask, still it must be admitted that there is a common Evidence in this Case which all the World understands, and acts upon without Scru-

* P. 28.

ple. Let him answer then to this plain Question ; Would he (such rare Instances notwithstanding) venture to bury his Friend, or his Child upon the common Evidences of Death, or would he not ? If he says he would not, somebody I doubt not would have Sense enough to do it for him. But if he says he would, let him tell me why that which is a sufficient Proof that a Man is dead when he is only to be put into the Ground, is not as good a Proof when his death is to be made use of as the Foundation to support a Miracle in his Resurrection ? For my own part, I can see no reason that can be assigned for any difference in these Cases, unless it be said, that we ought to be less afraid of burying Men alive, than of believing the Gospel.

I do not observe, that this Writer has anywhere suggested a Possibility of Mistake in the Case of *Lazarus*. The Reason is plain : For he, according to the History, having been four Days in the Grave, if there had been any Mistake at first, yet by that time he was certainly dead. But as to the *Widow's Son*, he, we are told, might have been in a *Lebargy* ; and *Jairus's Daughter asleep* or *in a Fit* ; all which is a direct Contradiction to the principal Circumstances of each Story, as I have shewn. Their Friends treated them as dead Persons, which supposes that they had the common Evidence of their being dead ; and this Evidence

as fully justified them in admitting the Miracle, as it would have justified them in putting the Bodies into the Grave. But to pleasure the Gentleman, we will admit his Plea for once, and see in what light the Cases will stand. The *young Man*, he says, was in a *Lethargick State*. Be it so ; but in all appearance he was so like a dead Man, that all about him concluded him to be dead, and accordingly carried him out in order to burial. How then could *Jesus* (supposing him to have been an Impostor) know, or so much as suspect that he was not dead, but in a Lethargy ? Why, says the Objector, (and it is all he had to say) *somebody might inform him*. But how so ? The very carrying this Man to his Grave, shews that there was no Suspicion of any such case, and consequently there could be no such Information ; much less could any one tell, or *Jesus* know, the exact time when the Man was to awake out of his Lethargy. What then are we to believe in this Case ? why, that *Jesus* needlessly offered himself to a publick Tryal, without the least reasonable Prospect of Success. The Company met him accidentally upon the Road ; but no body asked him, or challenged him to raise this Man to life. It was his own offer. *Jesus* therefore either supposed the Man to be dead, or he did not. If he supposed him to be dead, (as he had great reason) he must needs know (upon the foot we are now arguing) that it was not in his power
to

to raise him. If he did not suppose him dead, but hoped that there might be some such Mistake as this Writer talks of, the hazard that he might be disappointed in presuming upon a Case, which scarce happens once in a Century, added to the farther hazard, that if this should be the Case, the Man might not possibly awake upon his touching the Bier, and calling upon him to arise, made the Chance against him to out-run all reckoning. There is therefore no Sense in supposing, either that *Jesus* should have attempted any such thing, or if he had attempted it, that he should have succeeded. It was at least above ten Millions to one that he was defeated.

The Case of *Jairus's* Daughter will have exactly the same appearance. Here *Jesus* was requested by a Person of Note, to go and heal his Daughter then at the Point of Death. Before he could get to the House, a Messenger meets him and acquaints the Father, that she was actually dead. *Jesus* was so far from excusing himself upon this Change in the Case, (as he very easily might) that he offers of his own accord to go forward, and tells the Father, that he would raise her to life: *Be not afraid, only believe, and she shall be made whole*, Luk. viii. 50. It is obvious to remark, that, whatever might be the Case of this Child in reality, *Jesus* had all the reason in the world to believe her to be dead; for the Servant came on purpose

to make this Report. Here is therefore (supposing him an Impostor) the same Rashness and Presumption as in the other Case. But his Behaviour afterwards (if this Writer's Account of it be true) shews him to have been quite void of Sense. For when he comes to the House, what does he find? why the whole Family in an uproar, and possessed in the strongest manner imaginable, that she was dead; yet, says the Objector, *she was not dead, but asleep*, and *Jesus himself knew it*, and made publick Declaration of it before the whole Company, *the Dam-sel is not dead, but sleepeth*. Surely such a heap of Absurditys was never till now pack'd up together in one short Tale! Here is an Impostor making a bold and a desperate push, which must either ruin him at once, or establish his Reputation for ever. He undertakes to raise a Person to life whom he was assured was dead. If she was dead in good earnest, he was undone. All his Hopes rested upon a bare Possibility that there might be some mistake in the Case. Upon these Hopes he goes; and when he comes there, luckily finds that there was a mistake, and more luckily still, that he himself was the only one who perceived it. What now does he do? Why, instead of improving this extraordinary Accident to his own advantage, he takes away (as much as in him lies) all possible pretence for a Miracle, by declaring plainly, that the Person was not really dead as they

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supposed, but asleep, and wanted only to be awakened! If the Gentleman can in earnest believe that *Jesus* was capable of such Management as this, he must needs acquit him of having any hand in the Plot, which he has been pleased to cut out for him.

But to come to the Truth of the Case: *Jesus* by this Expression certainly meant nothing less than to declare against the Opinion and Knowledge of all the Company, that this Child was not naturally dead. We have the same way of speaking in the Case of *Lazarus*: *This Sickness*, says he, *is not unto death*. And again; *Our Friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep*. And yet, as appears from what follows, *Jesus* was sensible when he said this, that *Lazarus* was dead. A reasonable Man will as little doubt whether he believed that this Child was dead, or not; but the Objector's Argument will not permit *him* to say that *Jesus* believed her to be dead. Was he then persuaded that she was *not* dead? Impossible. For as *St. Mark* tells the Story, he had not so much as seen the Child when he said these Words; and whether he had, or had not, it is certain from all the Evangelists, that notwithstanding this Declaration of *Jesus*, the Company still believed her to be dead, and (mistaking the meaning of the Expression) were offended at him: which shews that the Evidences of Death upon her were very plain and strong. So that here

again, as in the foregoing Case, *Jesus* must be supposed to have run the hazard of a publick Defeat, not only without, but against all Probability of saving himself, and yet with the same good fortune as before. For no sooner did he pronounce these Words, *Damsel arise*, than *she arose and walked!* How credible this may appear to some Understandings, I cannot tell; but to me it seems impossible, (excluding all Supposition of Fraud) to give any tolerable Account of the Facts as they here stand related, without supposing in *Jesus* a *Consciousness* of a divine Power; which might be observed likewise of many other of our Saviour's Miracles, if it were proper to take notice of them in this place. If this Writer will persist in the contrary, and say, that all this was mere Chance, it will only shew the great Partiality of an unbelieving Spirit; which in considering the Evidences for Religion, takes offence at every thing, but in admitting Objections against it, finds nothing too hard for its Digestion.

I come now to the Suggestion of *Fraud*; which in the Objector's own Opinion seems to have no place in the Case of *Jairus's* Daughter; because in remarking upon this Story, he has not thought fit to offer any such Suggestion. But as to that of the *Widow's* Son, he says, that there might be a Trick * *concerted between Jesus, a subtil*

* P. 28.

Youth, and his Mother, and others; and all the Formalities of a Death and Burial contrived, that Jesus, whose Fame for a Worker of Miracles was to be raised, might have an opportunity to make a Shew of a grand one. The same account he gives also of the Case of Lazarus, who, says he, * *might consent to be interred alive in a hollow Cave, where there was only a Stone laid at the mouth of it, as long as a Man could fast, &c.* It will be allowed, I suppose, that these and all such like Suggestions, so far as they are mere Suggestions, unsupported by any Evidence, are of no weight; because otherwise there must be an end of all Historical Truth. The Objector indeed pretends, that † *It is Nonsense and mere Credulity to talk of a real, certain, and stupendous Miracle where there is a Possibility of Fraud:* which is quite absurd. For in all Questions concerning Facts, it is supposed, that the Matter or Thing under consideration might have been, or might not have been; and the determining the Fact this way, or that way, is the proper Use and Design of Evidence. If a Man be accused of robbing upon the Highway, it is supposed possible that he may have robbed, and possible also that he may not have robbed. Which of these two Possibilitys is the real Fact, is the Point in Judgment; and this must be determined by the weight of the Evidence on either side. This Writer says, that

* P. 29.

† P. 28.

possibly there may have been Fraud in these Cases. Very well. We have, I hope, as good a right to say, that *possibly* there may have been *no* Fraud ; and if we can bring proper Evidence to shew that there was no Fraud, and he has none to offer against it, to shew that there was Fraud, I suppose it will bear no question which way common Sense must determine.

It must be considered then what this Writer has offered against the Evidence of the Scripture-History, to shew that there was Fraud in these Cases. Now as to the Case of the *Widow's Son*, all that I can find to the purpose, is this, That *the mourning of the Widow — and Jesus's casual meeting of the Corpse upon the Road, looks like Contrivance to put the better face upon the matter* ; in which Observation there might have been some Sense, if the Suspicion of Fraud had first been well supported. But to found a Suggestion of Fraud merely upon these Circumstances, is absolutely ridiculous, and shews him to be perfectly careless in what he says. There is no question to be made, but that Sorrow may be counterfeited, and that a Design may sometimes lie concealed under the appearance of Chance and Casualty. But did ever any one say, that a Woman's weeping for the loss of her Son *proves* her to be a Hypocrite ? Or that two Persons meeting, as it were by accident upon the Road, is an *Evidence* of a Plot ? Fraud there *may* be, I say, under such Circumstances ; but then the

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Fraud

Fraud must be made appear not *by* such Circumstances, but by *something else*. The most obvious and natural Construction from these Circumstances, is, that there was no Fraud, as he himself confesses ; for why else does he say that they were contrived *to put the BETTER FACE upon the Matter* ? The truth is, that all Counterfeits endeavour to imitate Nature, and to hide their Cheat under the proper Characters of Truth. But is it reasonable therefore to suspect Fraud in a Case, merely because you observe the common Characters of Truth in it ? Every Coiner puts the King's Face and Inscription upon his false Money. Will you therefore think it reason enough to suspect every Shilling, because it has the King's Face and Inscription ? No ; all that can be said is, that the King's Face and Inscription are no certain Proof that there is no Fraud, where there is reason to suspect one ; but to say that of themselves they naturally import a Fraud, is highly absurd. Let the Gentleman then produce the proper Evidence of a Fraud, and his Plea shall be admitted ; otherwise we shall have a right to consider these Circumstances according to what they naturally import, and to argue from hence, that no Measures were concerted between *Jesus*, the young Man, and his Mother, or any others. If *Jesus's* meeting this Corpse upon the Road was really casual, it is plain, that no Measures could have been concerted. Now thus it is that the History represents

sents it. Upon the face of the History therefore all is right, and no appearance of any Fraud, but quite the contrary.

But for the Case of *Lazarus*, what shall we do? * *The most notorious Cheat*, says the Objector, *that was ever put upon Mankind!* And † *for the Proof of it*, he says, *we need go no farther than to the Circumstances of its Story, which our Evangelist has related.* I will not ask here what Interest Jesus or any one else could have in contriving such a Cheat: This is a Point to be spoken to hereafter. At present I confine myself to the Circumstances of the Story, as *St. John* has recorded it, which in my Apprehension are so far from having any appearance of Fraud, that they carry with them the strongest Presumptions of Honesty and Plain-dealing, that Circumstances can give. When *Lazarus* fell sick *Jesus* was not with him, nor did he see any of the Family till he had been buried some days. And when *Martha* and *Mary* met him, their Behaviour was such as might naturally be expected from those, who were under the most sensible concern for the loss of so near a Friend. The Gentleman, no question, will say again, that this was all Grimace, the better to disguise a Design concerted between them some time before, and now to be put in execution. Let him say so if he pleases. He will not pretend, I

* P. 31.

† P. 43.

hope, that these Circumstances have any Tendency to *shew* that there was any such Design ; and therefore (as I said just now) till the Fraud appears, we have reason to consider them as Presumptions at least on our side. What gives some weight to these Circumstances is, that the Disciples of *Jesus*, as their Behaviour shews, were perfectly ignorant of any Design concerted between their Master, and the Family of *Lazarus*. For when *Jesus* first open'd to them his Intention to go and visit *Lazarus*, they opposed it, fearing the Jews. (*ver.* 8.) When he told them that he was asleep, they (mistaking his meaning) conceived Hopes of his recovery. (*ver.* 12.) And when he told them plainly that he was dead, shew great Concern, and cry'd out ; *let us go that we may die with him.* (*ver.* 16.) Is this like Men who were privy to a Design of imposing upon the World by a counterfeit Resurrection, just then ripe for execution ? The Objector, I conceive, will have little room to say here, that this was Art and Contrivance. For what need was there of disguise in a private Discourse between *Jesus* and his own Disciples ? How credible it is now, that *Jesus* should have concealed a Design of this sort (had there been any such) from his Disciples, who (as this Writer is pleased to represent the matter) had so large a share in the grand Cheat of all, his own Resurrection, which was very soon to follow, I leave to any reasonable Person to consider.

But the great Points are yet behind, which are these, That the Man had been laid in his Grave four days, and that the Miracle of his Resurrection was wrought in the presence of a Multitude of People, Enemies as well as Friends; Circumstances which cut off all pretence of Fraud, as well as of Mistake. You have before heard, that in this Writer's Opinion, *Lazarus* might, for the Propagation of his Master's Fame, consent to be interred alive in a hollow Cave for two Days and three Nights: but how to provide for him so long, so as to prevent a real Tragedy, he seems (as well he might) to have been pretty much at a loss. Sometimes he thinks he might well enough *fast* all that while; at other times he is contriving how to get him some Food. Surely a very needless Care! since it is against all the Knowledge that we have to suppose it possible, that any Person disposed of as *Lazarus* was, should not very quickly be put beyond all Capacity of eating and drinking. Stript naked, swath'd up in Grave-Clothes, put into a Vault under ground, with a Stone laid upon it, intercepting Communication with the external Air, and yet alive and well on the fourth Day! Is this possible? We have no Instance of any thing like it. And fond as this Writer seems to be of his Cause, I am persuaded that he would not for all it is worth, be prevailed upon to submit to have the Experiment made upon himself. If he will, it is soon done; and I may venture to as-

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sure him, that one successful Attempt of this kind would go farther towards destroying the Credit of this Miracle, than all the Objections he can raise from the Circumstances of the Story. But if he thinks that this is hazarding a great deal too much, why should he not believe that *Lazarus* would have thought so too?

But let us suppose this Difficulty got over, and that *Lazarus* was all this while alive; still there is another Point as hard to account for, and that is how the People should be made to believe that he was dead, when the Grave came to be opened, and the Body exposed to publick View. To shew that Craft was used by *Lazarus* to impose upon the Multitude, the Objector lays hold of a very trivial Circumstance, *viz.* That *his Face was bound about with a Napkin, by which means* (says he) *the Spectators could not discern what was of the Essence of the Miracle, the Change of his Countenance from a dead to a live one.* It is marvellous to see how this Writer can shift and change his Notions to serve his Zeal against the Gospel-History. Now, it seems, the Spectators might have known *Lazarus* to be dead, had they but seen his Face. And yet just now, in the Cases before-mentioned, he supposes that the Friends and Relations of the Dead, who yet certainly saw their Faces, were mistaken, and were carrying their Friends alive to be buried. But to let this pass: He asks, *Why was not the Napkin taken away,* that the People might see

him to be dead? The Answer is ready, because no one did or possibly could think there wanted Evidence of his Death. Juglers may call upon the Company to observe them, and expand their hands before them, and cry, *All is fair*. But it never enters into the Mind of an honest Man, to use such suspicious Caution. Had Christ been conscious that he was going to play a Trick, he might have had such a Thought, as this Gentleman, it seems, would have suggested if he had been by. Or had the People conceived such an Opinion of Christ, as this Writer desires to insinuate, they might have thought of this and many other as curious things. But though many were averse to believe Christ to be the Messias, yet none doubted of the Reality of his Miracles: Even the most malicious supposed them real, though they attributed them to the Power of an evil Being. The true Answer therefore to this Writer is, That there was not, even among the Jews, one Man of his Spirit; not one who thought there wanted Proof of a Man's being dead, when he had been four days buried; not one who thought Christ only a pretended Worker of Miracles: No; long Experience had convinced them, how unwilling soever they were to own him for their Messias, that he was *mighty in Word and Deed*.

After all, I am not certain that the Gentleman is right in his Observation. The Text says, that Lazarus's *Face was bound about with a Napkin*;

kin; but it does not say that it was covered with a Napkin, so that the Spectators might not discern his Countenance. At chap. xx. ver. 7. we read Σουδάριον ὃ ἦν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς, *the Napkin that was UPON THE HEAD of Jesus*; by which it should seem that the *Sudarium* was a part of the Burial-dress that was bound about the Head, covering only the upper part of the Face or Forehead like a Night-Cap. And if so, this Circumstance can be no Proof that his Face was not open to the View of the Company, and that the Tokens of Death were not plain and visible. However this was, the Gentleman tells us plainly, that the Spectators (many of them at least) did by some means or other find out that *Lazarus* was alive, when *Jesus* pretended to raise him from the dead. For the Cheat, he says, was detected, and this was the reason why he was prosecuted, condemned, and put to death by the *Jews*. This Observation is to the purpose indeed, if it can be made good; let us see how he supports it.

He observes then from the Evangelist,* That
 “ many of the *Jews* who had seen the things that
 “ *Jesus* did, believed on him, (ver. 45.) that some
 “ of them who did not believe, went their ways
 “ to the Pharisees, and told them what things
 “ *Jesus* had done (ver. 46.) in this pretended Mi-
 “ racle, and how the Business was transacted.
 “ Whereupon the Chief Priests and Pharisees

* P. 41. & seq.

“ were

“ were so incensed, as *from that day forth they*
 “ *took counsel together to put him to death,* (ver.
 “ 53.) and *consulted that they might put Lazarus*
 “ *also to death,* (chap. xii. ver. 10.) *Jesus there-*
 “ *fore* (and his Disciples, and *Lazarus*, fled for
 “ it, for they) *walked no more openly among the*
 “ *Jews, but went thence into a Country near to*
 “ *the Wilderness* (a convenient hiding-place) and
 “ *there continued with his Disciples,* (chap. xi. ver.
 “ 54.) otherwise in all probability they had been
 “ all sacrificed.” Upon this general State of the
 Case he asks two Questions, viz. 1. * If there
 “ had been an indisputable Miracle wrought in
 “ *Lazarus’s* Resurrection, why were the Chief
 “ Priests and Pharisees so incensed upon it, as
 “ to take counsel to put both *Jesus* and *Laza-*
 “ *rus* to death for it? 2. † Why did *Jesus*
 “ and his Disciples, with *Lazarus*, run away and
 “ abscond upon it?” To these two Questions
 he thinks no reasonable Answer can be given;
 and thence concludes as above, that *Jesus* was
 detected in a Fraud, for which he was publick-
 ly tried and condemned. I am under some hopes
 that the Answer will not be found so difficult
 as the Gentleman is willing to suppose; and that
 these Circumstances fairly considered as they stand
 in the Gospel, will be so far from shewing that
Jesus was detected in a Fraud, that they will rather
 shew the contrary. The way to set this mat-

† P. 43.

† P. 44.

ter in a true light, will be to throw together the chief Passages of the Scripture-History subsequent to this Transaction, in order as they stand ; from whence I conceive, that the true Motives both of our Saviour's Conduct, and of the Behaviour of the *Jews* in reference both to him and *Lazarus*, will be made plain to any common Understanding.

In the first place then, it will be proper to take notice what present effect this Action had upon those who saw it. And as to this we are told, that *many believed on Jesus, but some went their ways to the Pharisees, &c.* By this it is plain, that the greater part of the Spectators not only confessed the Miracle, but were hereupon convinced that *Jesus* was the Christ. For *many* believed, and *some* (that is a few in comparison to those that believed) *went their ways, &c.* probably not above two or three. But few as they were, they were it seems wiser than all the rest, who (says our Writer) * *were ignorant, credulous, and easily imposed on.* Who doubts it? They were Believers; which is enough it seems to prove them Fools. But, setting this Reason aside, the Gentleman has no more Authority to pronounce them credulous, and easy to be imposed upon, than he has to say the same thing of the Inhabitants of the Moon, with whom he is just as well acquainted as he is with

* P. 49.

these ; only with this difference, that whatever degree of Prejudice the *Jews* had, he well understands it lay not in favour of *Jesus* as the Christ, but against him. But to leave him in possession of his wise Men : When they come to the Chief Priests and Pharisees, what do they tell them ? That they had detected *Jesus* in an Imposture ? Quite otherwise, as appears from what the Chief Priests and Pharisees said themselves, when, in consequence of this Information, they were assembled in Council. *What do we ? for this Man doth many Miracles : If we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him.* Would the Council have reasoned in this manner if the Purport of the Information had been, that *Jesus* had wrought no Miracle, but had been acting a Cheat, which they had discovered, and were ready to prove against him ? Impossible. The Information therefore must have been that *Jesus* had wrought a most surprizing Miracle ; and to this the very Passage, upon which this Writer relies, perfectly agrees. *Many* (says the Evangelist) *believed on Jesus, but some went their ways to the Pharisees.* The Antithesis here, supposes indeed, that those *some* that went their ways to the Pharisees *believed not.* But what was it that they did not believe ? Why that *Jesus* was the Christ. The Miracle they saw, and could not deny ; the Consequence of the Miracle they did not see, or would not acknowledge. There is no difficulty in conceiving this to be the

the Case ; Examples of it in Scripture are frequent.

What therefore the Objector lays down as
 * *plain from the Story in John*, viz. That *there was a Dispute among the By-standers at Lazarus's Resurrection, whether it was a real Miracle or not*, directly contradicts St. *John*: for even those who believed not, confessed the Miracle ; and it is scarce credible that they should have differed with the rest upon this Point. For had they discovered the Cheat, as is pretended, it is wonderful that they should leave any one of the Company to believe in Christ, when it was in their power upon the very spot to detect the Fraud that was committed. To what purpose was it for them to withdraw suddenly, and go with a Story to the Chief Priests, when they might with much better effect have open'd their Discovery to the rest of the People, and taken every Man there to be a Witness to the Forgery ? To go on now with the History. Upon this Information that the Chief Priests and Pharisees had received concerning *Jesus*, they presently determine *to put him and Lazarus to death*. Here the Objector demands a Reason, and asks,
 † *Where was the Provocation ?* I hope the Gentleman does not expect that I should give him a good Reason, that is, such a Reason as will justify the *Jews* in their Conduct towards *Jesus*.

* P. 51.

† P. 43.

But the true Reason (if I need tell it him) is this, viz. That the owning *Jesus* to be the Messiah, was giving up at once all those great Expectations which they had founded upon the Scripture-Prophecys; and that Prejudice had the same effect here which it is observed to have in many other Cases, to wit, the hardening Men against the Truth, and enraging them against those who abet and maintain it. This was the reason of their Hatred both to *Jesus* and *Lazarus*, who if they could once be put out of the way, it was hoped, I suppose, that in a little time the Miracle would no more be heard of. The Gentleman pretends, that * *'tis unnatural to hate a miraculous Healer of Diseases*, and much more so, *to hate a Man for having had a good and wonderful Work done on him*. Very true; if this were all. But it is weak to suggest, that either *Jesus* was hated for doing a good Work, or *Lazarus* for receiving the Benefit of it. *For a good Work* (say the Jews in a like Case) *we stone thee not, but because thou, being a Man, makest thyself God.* Joh. x. 33. And concerning *Lazarus*, it is particularly said, (what indeed is natural enough to be supposed) that the reason why the Chief Priests consulted to put him to death was because they found that through him many of the Jews went away and believed in *Jesus*, chap. xii. ver. 11. The Miracles of *Jesus*, as such, did not move their

Indignation ; but considered as brought in Evidence to give credit to a Doctrine, to which they had an irreconcilable Aversion. If *Jesus* had taught no Doctrine at all, or no Doctrine contrary to the Opinions commonly received, his healing the Sick, and raising the Dead to life, would questionless have every where gained him very great esteem, and they would very readily have admitted, that the Power by which he was enabled to do such Miracles, was indeed divine. But when the case was so that they could not acknowledge the hand of God in these things without giving up their Religion, though it is certain, that this was no reason why they ought not to have so done, yet it is easy enough to believe, that it might have the effect which we find it had in blinding their Eyes against Conviction, and in putting them upon contriving the Destruction both of *Jesus* himself, and of every one else who was instrumental in supporting his Authority among the People.

The Objector is so well apprized of the greatness of this Miracle, that, supposing it to have been really done, he thinks it was * *enough to have stopped the Mouths and turned the Hearts of the Jews in spite of all their Prejudices against Jesus*. And he is very positive, that † *if such a Miracle were wrought at this day in confirmation of Christianity, it would bring himself and every*

* P. 43.

† P. 46.

body else *to a Man, into the belief of it.* I am very much afraid the Gentleman knows not what he says. It is the Nature of this kind of Spirit, to be ever quarrelling with the Evidence we have, and to be crying out for something to supply its Defects, which the Wisdom of God has not thought fit to give us. That the Jews *ought* to have believed upon this Evidence, I agree with him: But if he means to urge their Unbelief as a Proof that such a Miracle was never wrought, (which is the plain Drift of his Argument) he reasons very absurdly: and I think it must be allowed, that he goes beyond all bounds of Discretion when he says, that * *it was not POSSIBLE for any People to be so bigotted, byassed, and prejudiced, as not to be wrought upon by it.* He himself confesses, that † *Mankind may be in some Cases very obdurate, and so hard of Belief, as to stand out against Sense, Reason, and Demonstration.* Let him shew then if he can, why the *Jews* might not possibly do so in the Case before us. What is this, or any other Miracle, more than a Demonstration to Sense and Reason of the Power of God? If then Demonstration as Demonstration may be resisted, why not a Miracle, which is but Demonstration? He observes, that ‖ *such a Miracle—would strike Men with awe and reverence; and none could hate and persecute the Author of*

* P. 46.

† P. 48.

‖ *Ibid.*

it, lest he who could raise the dead, should exert his power against themselves, and either wound or smite them dead with it : All which is very right, supposing Men to be first convinced that God is the Author of the Miracle. But the Point between us will still be, whether the Prejudices of many might not hinder them from discerning the hand of God in these things ; I say they might, and deny it he cannot, in consequence of his general Principle, that *Men may stand out against Demonstration*, unless he can shew some reason why this Case should be admitted as an Exception. But what should this Reason be ? Demonstration is Demonstration, let it be built upon what it will ; and there is not greater difficulty in resisting the Will of God when made known by the Evidence of a Miracle, than when made known by any other Evidence equally convincing. How far violent Prepossessions are capable of imposing upon the Understandings of Men, in judging concerning plain and evident things, nothing but Experience can determine ; and we see a variety of Instances of this kind every day, which if we did not see, we should hardly believe. I suppose, that we have not stronger Evidence from the Miracle of *Lazarus's* Resurrection, (admitting it to have been wrought) that *Jesus* was the Christ, than we have from the Principles of common Sense, that Transubstantiation is false. Yet there are Millions that believe this Doctrine, and are ready to cut the

Throats

Throats of all that deny it. It is absurd therefore to argue against any thing that is credibly related as Fact, from a mere presumption of what Mankind is, or is not capable of doing. For at this rate a hundred things may be proved false, which all the World knows to be true ; and I make no question, but that upon this foot, the Gentleman might make as plausible an Apology for his *Popish*, as his learned Friend the *Rabbi* has made for his *Jewish* Ancestors, and prove that there never was or could be any such thing as a Persecution of harmless innocent Protestants.

Thus much may suffice to have been spoken, in answer to the Objection against the Credibility of this Miracle, drawn from the *Jews'* Treatment of our Saviour. The following part of the Story will lead us to say something concerning our Saviour's Conduct, in consequence of this Treatment: For we are told, that upon this Consultation of the Chief Priests and Pharisees, *Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence unto a Country near to the Wilderness into a City called Ephraim, and there continued with his Disciples.* Joh. xi. 54. The Objector, who is willing to represent our Saviour upon this occasion as a mere Runaway, tells us of his withdrawing into a Country near the Wilderness, as a *convenient hiding-place* ; but wilfully omits to take notice, that he took up his abode at *Ephraim* ; the reason of which I presume

sume might be, that if he had mentioned this Circumstance, it might have appeared too plain to his Readers, that though he thought it prudent for the present to shelter himself from the Storm that was gathering, by retiring into a more private Place than *Jerusalem*, or the Parts adjacent ; yet he was not afraid to shew his head. But before I come directly to his Objections, give me leave to ask this one short Question ; If *Jesus* was a common Cheat, and had been publickly detected as such, upon so remarkable an occasion as this, how was it that he was permitted to retire towards the Wilderness ? Why was he not immediately seized upon the Place as soon as the Fraud was discovered, together with *Lazarus*, and all that were concerned as Accomplices with him ? The Gentleman himself observes, that if they had not fled, * *in all probability they had been sacrificed*. Very well. But why, I ask, were they suffered to flee ? Were there not hands enough to hold them ? † *If a false Prophet at this time a day should counterfeit such a Miracle, and be detected in the Operation* — What then ? Why (says he) *the Rage of the Populace would hardly wait the leisure of Justice to dispatch and make terrible Examples of them*. Right again. But did any thing like this happen to *Jesus* ? Quite the contrary. Instead of being made a Sacrifice to popular Rage,

* P. 42.

† P. 47, 48.

both he and his Disciples are suffered to go away quietly, without so much as any attempt to secure and bring them to publick Justice ! This shews plainly, that the Enemies of *Jesus* instead of discovering any Fraud, were perfectly confounded, and knew not what to do, till upon Consultation had with the Chief Priests and Pharisees, some measures were resolved upon. But to let this pass. *Jesus* knowing that Resolutions were taken to put him to death *retires*, (as was said afore) with his Disciples. *Is not here*, says our Writer, *a plain Sign of Guilt and Fraud* * ? I hope not ! They had indeed *God's Cause and Truth on their side*. But does an honest Cause preclude Men from the common Methods of Prudence to secure themselves from suffering unjustly ? In common Cases, I presume, it will be said, No. But the Gentleman farther observes, that they had *the Power of God on their Sides too* ; even † that *Power that raised Lazarus from the dead, which was able to have protected them against their Enemies*. No doubt it was able : But what if in the Wisdom of God it did not seem meet to make use of that Power for their Deliverance ?

There was a time appointed in the foreknowledge of God, when *Jesus* was to be offered upon the Cross for the Sins of the World. This time was not yet fully accomplished, tho' it was

* P. 44.

† P. 16.

indeed nigh at hand. But till it should be accomplished he was to be preserved ; How? Plainly not by a miraculous Interposition, but by the ordinary Methods of Providence. For had he summon'd his *Legions* from Heaven, and overthrown his Enemies by a visible exercise of his sovereign Power, *how then* (as he himself observes) *should the Scriptures have been fulfilled that thus it must be?* Mat. xxvi. 54. Who after such a Defeat as this would have dared again to have laid hands on him? The Gentleman perhaps will not like this Account of *Jesus's* Flight: I cannot help it. If he will not allow it to be true, he cannot deny it to be consistent ; and till he is in a fit Temper to receive it, let him run over the remaining part of our Saviour's Life, and see if his Behaviour was such as can with any tolerable Appearance of good Sense be supposed of a Man who had been detected as an Impostor, and was fled from the hand of Justice. It was not long that he continued at *Ephraim*, and what is very remarkable, the next News we hear of him was at *Bethany*, in the House of *Lazarus*, where he was entertain'd at *Supper*, publickly, in the presence of *great numbers of the Jews, who came, not only for Jesus sake, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.* Joh. xii. 1—10. *Bethany* was a Village about two Miles distant from *Jerusalem* (Joh. xi. 18.) where, within six days, the Passover was to be celebrated (Joh. xii. 1.) Here our Saviour, whose design was

to be at the Feast) took up his Quarters, and during this short Interval went dayly to *Jerusalem*, where he appeared in the most publick and frequented Places. The first time of his going thither he was met upon the way by great Throngs of People, who with loud Acclamations, and other publick Marks of Honour, usher'd him into the City, (*vers. 12.*) After this we find him in the Temple, driving out the Buyers and Sellers, (*Mat. xxi. 12.*) disputing with the Scribes and Pharisees; rebuking them sharply with biting Parables; and exposing them openly in his Discourses to the People, as blind, wicked, and hypocritical. (*Vers. 23. to the end, and Chap. xxii. xxiii. throughout.*) Let me stop here then, and ask a few Questions. What was it that brought *Jesus* from *Ephraim*, whither he had retir'd for Security? Was he pursued? Was he driven from thence? No; it was his own Choice. But would he have come away so quickly? Would he have come again to *Bethany*, the very Place where the Fraud had so lately been discover'd, and to the House of the very Man who was the principal Actor with him in the Cheat? Would he have gone to *Jerusalem*, into the very teeth of his Enemies? Or would they from whom but a little while before he made his Escape *for fear of being sacrificed*, have received him immediately with such Marks of Distinction? There is no Degree of Credibility in these Suppositions; nor is any tolerable Account to be gi-

ven of the Facts as related on either side, without admitting in our Saviour a Consciousness of his own Innocency of any just Imputation of Fraud, and on the part of the People a general Persuasion that he wrought these Miracles by the Power of God. The Freedom of Speech which our Saviour used, in reproving the great and leading Men among them, had been downright Madness in him, if he had known himself obnoxious. But it is worth our notice, that in all the Disputes that *Jesus* had at this time with the chief Priests and others, who us'd all the Artifice possible to *entangle him in his Talk*, and to catch something from him, which might furnish them with just Matter of Accusation ; there is not the least Hint or Intimation of any Fraud committed, or suspected to have been committed in the Case of *Lazarus*, which (considering the great weight of the Objection, supposing it to have been true ; the short Time that had passed since the thing was done ; and that several were there present, who must have been Witnesses of the Fraud) that somebody or other should not have taken notice of, to disgrace him with the People, it is to me utterly incredible. But contrary to this *St. John* expressly says (Chap. xii. ver. 17.) that *the People that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his Grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record to Jesus ; intimating withal, that the Fame of this Miracle occasion'd a greater Concourse than ordinary at Jerusalem at that time. For thus*

it follows (*vers.* 18.) *For this cause the People also met him, for that they heard that he had done this Miracle.* A clear Demonstration that there was no detection of Fraud in the Case of *Lazarus*, but that the Fact was as the Evangelist has represented it.

I might further add, that at *Jesus's* Tryal before *Pontius Pilate*, there is not a Word about any Fraud in the Case of *Lazarus*: that *Lazarus* himself was never called to account for his Part in the Cheat; and that the Supposition of a Cheat detected in the Case of *Lazarus*, makes the Caution of the *Jews*, to prevent the like Fraud in *Jesus's* own Resurrection absurd and unaccountable. But these things have * already been set in a proper Light. And therefore to conclude this Point: You have seen how these Cases stand upon the face of the Scripture-History, and it appears,

1. That taking them as they are recorded by the Evangelists, they are clear of all such Absurdities and Inconsistencies as may justly render them suspicious.
2. That in the Relation of these Facts, there are no Circumstances wanting, which are necessary to make them full and sufficient Proofs of what they were intended to shew, to wit, our Saviour's Power in raising the dead to Life; under which Head I have clear'd them likewise from all Imputation of Mistake or Fraud. But it will be said, 'tis likely, that Circumstan-

* *Trial of the Witnesses*, p. 38, 39.

ces may be invented as well as Facts ; and that the Apostles, if they had any Design of imposing upon the World, by a relation of counterfeit Miracles, might have Discretion enough, by suppressing some Particulars which were true, and reporting others which were not true, to give the whole an Air of Credibility. It may now therefore be proper to consider,

Secondly, What is the Evidence upon which we believe these Facts to have been justly and faithfully represented, and what Exceptions this Writer has produced to weigh against that Evidence.

That the Books of the New Testament are the genuine Writings of the Persons whose Names they bear, the Gentleman denies not. That there was such a Person as *Jesus Christ*, and that these Writers had that relation to him, as Disciples and Followers, which they pretend to have had, he all along admits, and takes for granted. Whether therefore the Evangelists were qualified or not qualified to give us a true Account of what *Jesus* did, if they were minded so to do, can be no part of the Question between us ; for they speak of such things, as, if they were done at all, were done in their own Times, whereof themselves (as the constant Attendants of *Jesus*, during the Time of his Ministry) must have been Eye-Witnesses, or have received immediately from those who were so. The only Point in dispute then must be, whether the Evangelists are Persons to
be

be depended upon or not ; and concerning this it is sufficient to say that they have given the strongest Evidence of their Integrity that it is in the power of Man to give : I mean in their maintaining these Truths, under the most absolute Renunciation and Defiance of the World, and, at last, sealing them with the Testimony of their Blood. The Objector laments it as * *a sad Misfortune that attends our Inquiry after Truth in these Matters, that there are no other Memorials extant of the Life and Miracles of Jesus than what are written by his own Disciples.* As if the Evangelists were therefore not to be credited because they were the Disciples of Christ. But this must needs be a weak Pretence, because it is not reasonable to expect that the Enemies of Jesus should have left any Memorials of him as a Worker of Miracles. The Jews, you see, took all the pains they could that they might be no more heard of ; and it is natural enough to believe, that all the World besides, who would not be convinced by his Miracles, should do the like as well as they. So that if a History of the Life and Miracles of Jesus is not to be expected from his Enemies, nor admitted from his Friends, the Consequence must be, that tho' Jesus did work these Miracles, and give the proper Evidences of his working them, to those who were themselves Witnesses of what he did ; yet there was no such thing as recording or

* P. 50.

reporting these Miracles, in such a sort as to make it reasonable for any body else to believe them ; which, I think, is by much too great an Absurdity to stand with common Sense. But why are the Disciples of *Jesus* not to be credited, in reporting the Actions of their own Master ? Supposing them to be Men of Integrity, the Circumstance of their being Disciples, is so far from making their Evidence the worse, that it makes it the better : For who were so likely to know what *Jesus* did, as they who constantly attended him during his Ministry ? Now this I say, that if the Apostles have not given full and sufficient Proof of their Integrity, there is no possibility that any Man upon Earth should give sufficient Proof of his Integrity ; because in the Reason and Nature of Things, there can be no stronger Evidence of a Man's Integrity, than his laying down his Life in Confirmation of what he says. The Apostles were *Jesus's* Friends. You say right. But what did they get by being his Friends ? *Houses, or Lands, or Friends*, or any thing else that could make it worth their while to tell Lyes for him ? If this had been the Case the Objection would have some sense in it : But since they were told aforehand, by their Master himself, and afterwards found it true by their own Experience, that the Consequence of their being his Friends, would be their being at enmity with all the World besides, and that it was impossible that they should appear as Maintainers

of

of his Doctrines, or as Witnesses of his Works, without giving up the Life that now is for the sake of another to come ; it is evident beyond exception, that supposing them to have had the common Passions and Sentiments of Men, and not to have been quite beside themselves, their Steadiness in asserting these things to the last, can be resolved into nothing else, than the Power and Conviction of Truth upon their Minds. You might say (if you could shew any good Reason for saying so) that the Apostles were Fools or Madmen, for believing that *Jesus* Christ wrought these Miracles. But to pretend, that notwithstanding they have asserted, that *Jesus* wrought these Miracles, yet that they themselves did not believe that he wrought them, after such Evidence of their being superior to every Consideration that might tempt them to falsify, is absurd, and contradicts all the Notions and Experience we have of Mankind.

The Gentleman, in answer to this common and general Argument, somewhere observes coldly, that * *many Cheats and Criminals have asserted their Innocency in the utmost Extremity of Death* ; which, how little it is to the purpose, has already been shewn in a † Treatise before mentioned, to which I refer the Reader. Thus much I think is the least that any Man of Sense and

* *Sixth Discourse*, p. 27.

† *Trial of the Witnesses*, p. 103.

Reason can say, That if the Evangelists have not given absolute and incontestable Proof of their Integrity, they have given very great Proof of it: And that this Proof, whatever it is, ought to be admitted as sufficient, till some Considerations of greater, or at least equal, weight be offered to ballance on the other side. What then has this Writer to say against this Evidence? Hitherto we have heard of nothing but Surmises, mere Surmises, such as would not in any ordinary Case be allowed to bear down the Credit of any common Evidence. But there are two Objections which seem in a more direct manner to affect the Credit of the Evangelists as Historians, which I shall briefly reply to, and then thank my Reader for the Patience he has allowed me.

His first Observation is a mere Presumption, which therefore I should not have taken notice of, but that the Gentleman is pleased to say that * *in the Opinion of the Impartial it makes for his Cause.* It is this; That *not only Time has devoured, but Christians themselves, when they got the Power into their hands, wilfully destroyed many Writings of the Jews, as well as of Celsus and Porphyry, and others which they could not answer; otherwise he doubts not but they would have given us clear Light into the Imposture, of Lazarus's Resurrection.* That many Books antiently written against Christianity, by Jews and others, are now lost, there can be no question. But did the Gentleman ever see

* *Fifth Discourse*, p. 50.

any of these Books? No, they have been lost long ago. How then does he know that these Books were unanswerable? Or why is he so positive that they *would have given us a clear Light into the Imposture of Lazarus's Resurrection*, or of any other Miracle of *Jesus*, but because, as I have observed before, he finds it an easy matter to believe every vain Surmise, that starts up in his Head to the prejudice of Christianity, and is determined to admit of nothing, how reasonably soever it is offered, that speaks in its favour. If he will take the Character of *Porphry*, (whose Books *Theodosius* the Emperor order'd to be burnt) from *Eusebius* who had seen and read them, he will find in it a very unhappy Description of some Writers of these Times : For he says, he was one * *who for lack of Reasons to support his Cause, set himself to railing, and that he would sometimes speak Truth, when he could not help it ; but never scrupled to tell a Lye, when he thought he could palm it upon his Readers, without being discovered.* I do not expect that the Authority of *Eusebius* should pass with this Writer ; nor that he will allow the Reasonings of *Celsus* to have been fairly represented by *Origen*. These were Christians, and therefore not to be believed in their own Cause. But if *Celsus* and *Porphry*, were really such strenuous, unanswerable Advocates of

* Ἀπορία λόγων ἐπὶ τὸ λοιδορεῖν τρέπεται—τὰ μὲν ἐπαληθεύων ἐν οἷς ἔδ' ἑτέρως αὐτῷ λέγειν ὡς δύνατον. τὰ δὲ ψευδόμενα ἐν οἷς λήτεσθαι ἐνόμιζε. Eccles. Histor. Lib. 6. Cap. 19.

Heathenism, how came their Friends to suffer their Books to be lost? Time was, when the Heathens had Power enough, and the Christians were harraſſed and hunted for in every Corner; their Books demanded to be delivered up, and as often as delivered, deſtroyed; yet in ſpite of all this, the Writings of the New Teſtament (which were all of them extant above two hundred Years before the Empire became Chriſtian) ſtood their ground, and by the good Providence of God remain unto this day. But no ſooner (ſays our Writer) is the ſame Power in the hands of Chriſtians, but away fly the Books of Infidels as in a Whirlwind. How ſo? one may reaſonably aſk. Were not the Heathens, when under the Power of the Chriſtians, as able to preſerve their Books from being deſtroyed, as the Chriſtians, when under the Power of the Heathens, were to preſerve theirs? No doubt but they were, if mere Power were the only thing to be conſidered. But there was this remarkable Difference in the Caſe, which is the only thing that can give an adequate Account of the different Fate of theſe Writings. The Books of the New Teſtament were ſo confirmed and eſtabliſhed by undoubted Evidence, and Chriſtians were ſo fully convinced of their divine Authority, that they willingly ſacrificed their Lives, rather than deliver up their Books; and by this means they were preſerved, and outlived the Rage of ten Perſecutions. The Writings of *Celfus* and *Porphyrus* were (like thoſe

which this Gentleman's Friend the *Rabbi* furnishes him with at every turn) senseless, lying Invectives, with which, tho' perhaps many were pleas'd, yet no one had that value for them, as to run any hazard to preserve them, and therefore they easily fell under the Punishment which many thought due to the Spite and Malice which gave them birth. I commend not their Zeal: I wish the Books were now extant, and am persuaded that this Gentleman and his Friends would boast less of them, if they had them, than they do now they want them. For were they extant, what more could they signify than this Gentleman's Discourses? So far as mere Reasoning is concerned, he would be offended perhaps if we should suspect that he wanted any help from these Fathers of Infidelity, to find out *Absurditys*, *Inconsistencys* and *Incredibilitys* in the Letter of the Scriptures. And as to the Matter of Fact, let *Celsus* or *Porphry*, or any other, be supposed to say, with as much Assurance as *he* does, that *Jesus* was an Impostor, and that the History of his Miracles, as given us by the Evangelists, is a mere Fable: The Question, after all, will be, Whom are we to believe? That they, or any Authorities they could bring to vouch for them, could have better Opportunities of knowing the Truth, than the Evangelists had, is absolutely impossible; and that any of them have given any such Proofs of their Honesty and Sincerity, as the Evangelists did, a Man must have no Sense of Shame that can maintain.

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The next, and only remaining Objection, is drawn from * *the unnatural and preposterous Order of Time* (as he is pleas'd to express himself) *in which these three Miracles are related*, which (says he) *justly brings them all under Suspicion of Fable and Forgery*. The Gentleman makes great to do with this Observation. I shall represent the full Strength of it in a very few Words.

The Case then is this. These three are all the Instances we have upon Record of *Jesus's* Power, in raising the Dead to Life, his own Resurrection excepted; and all of them are not recorded by each of the Evangelists. The History of *Jairus's* Daughter is mention'd by three of them, *viz. Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. That of the Widow's Son, is related by *St. Luke* alone. And that of *Lazarus* only by *St. John*, who has omitted to speak of the other two. This is matter of Fact. From hence the Objector argues, that it is very unlikely that these Stories should be any of them true. For, says he, " These three Miracles are not equally great, but differ in degree. The greatest is that of *Lazarus*. Next to it is that of the *Widow's* Son. And least of all, that of *Jairus's* Daughter. What then could be the Reason that *Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, who all wrote their Gospels before *John*, should omit to record this remarkable, and most illustrious Miracle of *Lazarus*? And why too did not *Matthew* and *Mark* mention

“ the Story of the *Widow* of *Naim*’s Son? To
 “ aggrandize the Fame of their Master for a Wor-
 “ ker of Miracles, was the Design of all the E-
 “ vangelists ; and if it was not necessary that all
 “ of them should set down every Miracle of this
 “ kind, still it is absurd and unnatural to suppose
 “ that any of them (especially the first Writers)
 “ should omit the greatest of all, which would
 “ have done him most credit, and take notice
 “ only of the least. If *Matthew* had recorded
 “ only the Story of *Lazarus*, *Luke* had added
 “ that of the *Widow*’s Son ; and *John* lastly had
 “ remembred us of *Jairus*’s Daughter, which the
 “ other Evangelists, studying Brevity, had o-
 “ mitted, then all had been well, and no Ob-
 “ jection had hence lain against the Authority of
 “ the Evangelists. But as the Case now stands,
 “ it looks as if there were three Romantick Wri-
 “ ters, who strove to outstretch one another in
 “ their several Stories. The first was sparing and
 “ modest in his Romance. The second, being
 “ sensible of the Insufficiency of the former’s
 “ Tale, devises a Miracle of a bigger size ; which
 “ still not proving sufficient to the End proposed,
 “ the third Writer, rather than his Prophet’s
 “ Honour should sink for want of a Resurrection
 “ Miracle, forges a monstrously huge one ; against
 “ which it will be always Objection enough,
 “ that it was not related by the first Histo-
 “ rian, nor invented by the last, till he was a-
 “ bove a hundred Years old, in his dotage, and
 “ every

“every body dead that should have confuted
“him.”

Thus stands the Objection ; upon which I cannot help making one general Remark, *viz.* That there is a great deal too much in it to be true. Here is a Design of imposing upon Mankind, by a fabulous History of sham Miracles, to aggrandize the Fame of a pretended Prophet, father'd upon the Evangelists. This Design is represented as, within some few Years after its first broaching, (like a weak and crazy Building) always tottering, and ready to fall, and wanting at every turn to be propt up by some new Forgery. The Histories of St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*, are supposed, in vertue of one, and that a small Resurrection Miracle, to have been the first Support to the Prophet's declining Honour. But this proving too weak to sustain the encreasing Weight, out comes St. *Luke*, some Years after, with a new one, and a bigger ; and St. *John*, for the like Reason, with another bigger than that, at some greater distance of Time. I will venture to say, that there never was any State of the Christian Church that will agree with this Representation, nor is there indeed any thing so void of Probability. The Gospel, from its first Promulgation, was every day gaining ground, so that there was no occasion, in order to support its sinking Credit, to have recourse to new Forgeries. Nor if there had been occasion, could the Project have possibly succeeded, since whatever

discredited any old Forgery, must much more have discredited any new one, against which the very Novelty of it would have been an unanswerable Objection. But not to pursue this Writer in his peculiar way of arguing upon the Case (which would be an endless Task) I will apply myself directly to the single Point, which comprehends the whole Difficulty; namely, If these two Miracles were really wrought, how came it to pass, that neither St. *Matthew*, nor St. *Mark* took any notice of them? That they should be ignorant, or have forgot that they were wrought, is incredible; and that they should knowingly have omitted them may seem very strange, considering how many Miracles they have both of them set down, which are less remarkable, than these. This is all that we have to answer for, and if we can answer satisfactorily, the whole Objection must fall of course. There can be no occasion to consider both Cases distinctly. What serves for one will also serve for the other. Taking therefore the Case of *Lazarus*, which may seem liable to most Exception, I shall endeavour to shew, that the Silence of the preceding Evangelists is no sort of Proof, that this Story was forged by St. *John*.

The Gentleman lays it down as the Principle upon which he builds, That * *the Design of all the Evangelists was to aggrandize their Master's Fame as a Worker of Miracles*; which, abating

something for the Indecency of the Expression, is very true. The Evangelists recorded the Miracles of *Jesus Christ* for the same Reason for which he wrought them ; which was to shew, that he was a Prophet sent from God. But through Vanity and Ostentation they recorded nothing ; and therefore instead of setting down all the Miracles which our Saviour wrought, (which, as St. *John* intimates, was scarce practicable) they content themselves each of them to mention so many as seemed to be sufficient. Thus far, I think, there is no harm ; for the Gentleman does not pretend to say, that it was necessary that ALL the Miracles wrought by our Saviour should have been recorded by each particular Evangelist ; on the contrary he confesses, as to that particular kind of Miracle now under Consideration, (to wit, the raising the Dead to life) that † *one Instance was enough*. But, says he, *which should they* (St. Matthew and St. Mark) *as wise and considerate Historians, have made choice of, the greatest or the least Miracle ? The greatest, to be sure, and that was that of Lazarus, or of the Widow's Son, if they knew of either. But instead of these they tell us the Story of Jairus's Daughter, that is, of an imperfect and disputable Miracle in comparison of the other two, which consequently they knew nothing at all of, or they would have preferred the Report of them.*

† P. 9.

To confine myself, as I said before, to the Case of *Lazarus*, and to give the Gentleman some relief under *his* Difficulty, (for to say the truth, it is in a great measure a Difficulty of his own making) I desire in the first place, that he would consider what Foundation there is in Reason and Truth, to make that mighty Distinction between these two Miracles, which this Argument supposes. The raising *Jairus's* Daughter, you see, was but a pitiful business in comparison to the Resurrection of *Lazarus*, which was a *huge, most prodigious, most stupendous and superlatively great Miracle*. It concerned him to raise the Miracle of *Lazarus's* Resurrection as much as he could: For the greater the Difference, the better his Argument, which must drop at once if the Difference were little or none at all. Because of two Miracles equal, or next to equal, an Historian may certainly, without any Reflection upon his Judgment, chuse which he will record. Where then I ask is that mighty Difference between these two Miracles? I hope we shall hear no more of *an insignificant Girl of twelve Years old*, nor that it will be expected that I should shew over again, against this Writer, (who is pleased here to call it *an imperfect and disputable Miracle*) that according to all the Circumstances of the Story, the Child was dead and known to be so by all about her. Now if she was really dead, the Miracle in raising her from the dead was just as great as that of raising

sing

ling *Lazarus* ; for between *dead*, and *dead*, there is no difference. But *Lazarus*, you will say, had been buried four days. What then? He could be *but dead*, if he had been buried fifty. The utmost that you can make of this Circumstance is, that there was greater Evidence that *Lazarus* was dead, than there was that *Fairus's* Daughter was dead, and even this is not certain. That *Fairus's* Daughter was not dead so long as *Lazarus*, is very sure, but how long she was dead, the Story does not say ; and it is evident from Experience, that there are some Tokens which will as infallibly prove a Person to be dead from the time of his expiring, as if he had been in the Grave many days. But be this as it will, the Evangelists that first recorded the Story of this Woman, did not want Evidence that she was dead, nor suspect that any body else wanted it. And therefore this Miracle could not but appear to them as great a Miracle, as the raising a Person from the dead, under any Circumstances could afford.

But let it be supposed, that the Resurrection of *Lazarus* was the greater Miracle of the two ; why must the omitting to record this Story be look'd upon as an Instance of so great weakness or carelessness in St. *Matthew*, St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke*, that rather than it should be admitted, St. *John* must presently be given up as guilty of Forgery? St. *John* affirms, that *Jesus* raised *Lazarus* from the dead. The other no where

deny this, only they make no mention of it. Will you now pretend to say, that a mere Negative against the Truth of this Miracle shall avail more than plain and direct Evidence for it? It is absurd to say so; and the Reason why it is absurd is this, That it is infinitely more easy to conceive that those other Evangelists should omit to mention this Miracle, notwithstanding it was the greater of the two, than that St. *John*, who has given such undoubted Proofs of his Integrity, should falsify in this Case. The Reasons which have been offered by *Grotius*, and others, to account for this Omision, our Writer rejects as *weak* and *insufficient*, but scorns to tell us why. His pretence for this is, that * *it is not worth while to consider them, till somebody shall appear in the Defence of them*, which is something pretty extraordinary. Against whom, or against what should we defend them? These Reasons are what they always were, and if it is none of his business to oppose them, surely it is much less ours to vindicate them. What *Grotius* says is this, That when the three first Evangelists wrote, *Lazarus* was living, and that the inserting his Case into their History, might possibly have brought him under some ill Treatment from the *Jews*. To which Dr. *Whitby* adds, that it might seem less needful to mention a Miracle concerning a Person living so near *Jerusalem*, where there was

so great a Fame thereof, and so many living Witnesſes. When the Gentleman has *time enough to spare*, he may ſhew if he thinks fit, why either, or both of theſe Conjectures may not be admitted as probable.

He is pleaſed to alledge in ſupport of his Argument, that * *the firſt Writer of the Life of an Hero, to be ſure, makes mention of all the grand Occurrences of it, and leaves no room for Biographers afterwards, but to enlarge and paraphraſe upon what he has written, with ſome other Circumſtances and Additions of leſs moment.* In which account the Gentleman ſeems to have had in view ſome learned Hiſtorian, antient or modern, (who undertakes to treat of things with great Order and Exactneſs) and to have forgotten that the Queſtion concerns ſuch plain, artleſs Men as *Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. But the uſe that he makes of this Obſervation is not to be endured. *If a third or fourth Biographer after him ſhall preſume to add a more illuſtrious Tranſaction of the Hero's Life, it will be rejected as Fable or Romance,* THOUGH FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THIS, *that the firſt Writer muſt have been apprized of it, and would have inſerted its Story, if there had been any Truth in it.* I deny it, Sir. No body judges in this manner, except it be in certain Caſes, which at preſent we have nothing to do with. If the firſt Writer be ſuppoſed to report things which happened in his

own Times, and the second to have lived at some considerable Distance from him, the Rule will hold. Because in that Case, the first Writer had certainly the best Opportunity of coming at the Truth, and the Fact omitted by him, and reported by the second, may reasonably enough be presumed to have been taken upon slender Authority. It will likewise hold between two contemporary Historians, provided there be any concurrent Proofs which justly render the second Writer suspicious. But do but suppose the Case to happen between two Writers, recording Matters in which they themselves were both personally concerned, and that those Writers have given both of them equal and sufficient Evidence of their Honesty and Integrity, and there is no one of common Sense who will not impute such an Omission to want of Exactness in the first Writer, or to any other Cause, rather than charge the second with Forgery.

One thing should be taken notice of before I dismiss this Subject, which is, that the supposing this Story to be a Forgery of St. *John's*, seems not to be consistent with that Account of it which this Writer elsewhere principally insists upon ; namely, that it was a Cheat contrived between *Jesus* and *Lazarus*, in which *Jesus* was publicly detected, and for which he was arraigned and condemned by the *Jews*. A Forgery is properly a Story of a Man's own Invention, which has no Foundation in Fact. A Cheat is

a real Transaction, deceiving you only in some particular Circumstance. But this is not worth insisting upon: For whether it were a Cheat, or whether it were a Forgery, it will equally affect the Credit of *Jesus* and his Doctrine; but our great Comfort is, that it could be neither, and that for this plain reason, that if *St. John* had either invented a Story which had never been heard of before, or endeavoured to revive an old Cheat publickly detected and exposed, to make it pass upon the World as a real Miracle, no body would have believed him. It is in vain to say, that *St. John* wrote this Story * *after the Jewish State was dissolved, their Judicial Records destroyed, and every body dead that should confute him.* For if this Story was pure Invention, it would have confuted itself; because if such a thing was really transacted, the Memory of it must have been preserved; and so must the Memory of so remarkable a Cheat so publickly detected. *St. John* wrote his Gospel not above sixty Years after the thing happened, nor much above twenty Years after the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; at which time there was probably a great number of Witnesses every where alive (and especially in and about *Jerusalem*) who could remember the whole Affair, and would have been able effectually to have blasted the Credit of the Story, and of the Author both.

* P. 53.

What has been said is sufficient, I think, to answer this Writer's Cavils, and therefore I take leave of Mr. *Woolston*. But for the Reader's Satisfaction shall add one general Observation upon St. *John's* Gospel, which will help to set this matter in a very clear Light. It was a Tradition in the antient Church, that St. *John* wrote his History at the request of the *Asian* Bishops, to supply the Defects of the former Evangelists. The Authoritys upon which this Account stands may be found in most of the Commentators, and therefore it is not necessary to repeat them here. But the History itself greatly favours this Notion, which whoever will take the pains to compare with those of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, he will find that it consists almost entirely of such Occurrences as are no where to be found in any of those Evangelists. Not to mention many other Particulars of this sort; the Miracles of our Saviour, recorded by St. *John*, antecedent to his Resurrection, are in all but eight; viz. 1. His turning Water into Wine at the Marriage in *Cana of Gallilee*. 2. His telling the *Samaritan* Woman the Secrets of her Life. 3. His healing the Nobleman's Son at *Capernaum*. 4. His curing the lame Man at the Pool of *Bethesda*. 5. His feeding five thousand Men with five Barly Loaves and two Fishes. 6. His walking upon the Water, and calming a Storm at Sea. 7. His giving Sight to a Man born blind, by anointing his Eyes with Clay, and sending him to wash in *Siloam*.

Siloam. 8. His raising *Lazarus* from the dead. All which Miracles are omitted by the former Evangelists, except the fifth and the sixth; and these two *St. John* seems to have recorded chiefly to introduce a moral Discourse which our Saviour took occasion to make to the People, whereof the former Evangelists had taken no notice. And therefore the Silence of the former Evangelists is not a stronger Objection against the History of *Lazarus*, than it is against many other Facts recorded by *St. John*, or, to speak more properly, than it is against his whole Gospel. But how it should be an Objection against *St. John*, either in the whole, or in part, it is impossible to understand. For when a Writer professedly undertakes to supply the Defects of former Historians, does not the Undertaking itself imply, that he is to mention many things by them omitted? How else are these Defects supplied? Or how CAN such Defects at any time be supplied, if the very Attempt to supply them is to be look'd upon as a sufficient Reason, why the later Historian shall be charged with Forgery? You may think it perhaps a Disparagement to the three former Evangelists, that their Historys of the Life and Actions of our Saviour, should have any such Imperfection as to make it worth *St. John's* while to write a new one by way of Supplement. But the primitive Christians were of another mind; and it is well worth observing what *Eusebius* says upon this

very Case, which is to this effect; *viz.* That the Apostles of Christ, though under the Power and Direction of the Spirit of God, were not Masters in all the Nicetys of Language, nor instructed in all the Arts necessary to form complete Historians *. Their Writings at this day shew as much: For not one of them have given us an exact History of Christ. All of them have omitted many things which the others, one or more of them, have recorded. And even St. *John* himself confesses, that his own Gospel, though it supplied the Defects of the former Evangelists in many respects, left the History of *Jesus* still unfinished. For thus he concludes; *And many other Signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book.* Joh. xx. 30. The reason of all which is to be resolved, as in all likes Cases, into the Judgment and Discretion of these several Historians, who out of that infinite variety of Miracles wrought by our Saviour, chose each of them such as seemed to them to be most material; and if upon the whole, the good Providence of God hath so ordered it, that there

* Οἱ θεσπέσιοι καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς θεοπροπέτες, σημεῖ δὲ τὰς τῷ Χριστῷ Αποστόλους — τῇ γὰρ πρὸς τὸ Σωτῆρος αὐτοῖς δεδομένην θύραν καὶ παραδοξοποιῶ διωάμει θαρσύνοντες, τὸ μὲν ἐν περιούσιᾳ καὶ τέχνῃ λόγων τὰ τῷ διδασκαλικῷ μαθήματι προεβύβαν, ὅτε ἤθεσαν ὅτε ἐνεχέμεν. τῇ δὲ τῷ θεῷ πνεύματι τῷ σωτηριζόντι αὐτοῖς ἀποδείξει — μὴν χρώμενοι τῆς τῶν οὐρανῶν βασιλείας τὴν γνῶσιν ἐπὶ πᾶσαν κατήγγελλον, τὴν οὐκ ἐκείνην. σπουδῆς τῆς περὶ τὸ λογιζομένον μικρὸν ποιῶμεν; οὐκ ἔτιδα. Eccl. Hitor. Lib. 3. Cap. 24.

is enough recorded to lay the Foundation for a reasonable Faith, we ought to be contented, and should not be so absurd as to throw away what we have, because it is not ALL ; nor busy ourselves in enquiring minutely why this Miracle was recorded rather than another, when there is not so much as one of them that is not wonderful even beyond comparison. To go on with St. *John*.

From what has been said it appears, that the *Asian* Churches were, before the Writing of his Gospel, well assured of the Truth of many remarkable Facts relating to the History of Christ, which were omitted by the other Evangelists, otherwise they could have had no pretence to apply to St. *John* to supply the Defects of those other Evangelists. It appears farther, that the Gospel of St. *John* is an authentick Account of such Facts : For had St. *John* given a History of any other Facts than what were well known to the Church before he wrote them, the Question would have been obvious : How came it to pass that these things were never heard of till now ? which would have been an Objection against his History never to have been gotten over. But if you suppose that what himself was an Eye-witness of, and had been constantly received in the Church of God, as well upon his Testimony, as the Testimony of others ; that, and that only he inserted in his Gospel, as thinking it too ma-
terial

terial to be left any longer merely to the Conveyance of Tradition : as this implies no greater Deficiency in the former Evangelists than what is consistent with sound Sense, considering the Quality and Condition of those Writers ; so it will alone account for that universal Esteem which this Gospel obtained from the beginning in the Christian World.

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A

DISCOURSE

ON

Our SAVIOUR's Miraculous
Power of HEALING, &c.



INTRODUCTION.



THE Cases treated of in the following Discourse are. 1. *Jesus's* casting the Devils out of the Madmen. (*Disc.* 1. p. 31.) 2. His healing the Woman that was afflicted with an Issue of Blood (*Disc.* 2. p. 8.) 3. His curing the Woman that laboured under a Spirit of Infirmary. (*Ibid.* p. 27.) 4. His
A 2 healing

healing a Man at the Pool of *Bethesda*. (*Disc.* 3. p. 33.) 5. His giving Sight to a Man that was born blind. (*Disc.* 4. p. 3.) 6. His curing the Man that was sick of the Palsy. (*Ibid.* p. 51.) The Particulars whereof, as they are recorded by the Evangelists, I have placed here in one View for the Reader's Ease.

I. " When *Jesus* was come with his Disci-
 " ples into the Country of the *Gadarens*, or
 " *Gergasens* ; there met him two Men posses-
 " sed with Devils, coming out of the Tombs
 " exceeding fierce, so that no Man might
 " pass by that Way. And they cryed out,
 " saying, What have we to do with thee,
 " *Jesus* thou Son of God? — And there was
 " a good Way off from them, an Herd of
 " many Swine feeding ; And the Devils be-
 " sought *Jesus*, saying, If thou cast us out,
 " suffer us to go away into the Herd of
 " Swine. And he said unto them, Go. And
 " when they were come out, they went into
 " the Herd of Swine ; and the whole Herd
 " ran violently down a steep Place into the
 " Sea, and perished in the Waters, *Matt.* viii.
 " 28. See *Mark* v. 1. *Luke* viii. 26.

II. " When *Jesus* was going to *Jairus's*
 " House, in order to raise his Daughter from
 " the Dead ; a certain Woman, who had
 " been afflicted with an Issue of Blood twelve
 " Years,

“ Years, and had spent all her Substance up-
 “ on Physicians, and was nothing bettered,
 “ but rather grew worse, came behind him
 “ and touched the Hem of his Garment :
 “ (For she said within herself, If I may but
 “ touch his Garment I shall be whole.) Upon
 “ which *Jesus* turned him about, and when
 “ he saw her he said, Daughter be of good
 “ Comfort, thy Faith hath made thee whole.
 “ And the Woman was made whole from that
 “ Hour”. *Matt. ix. 20. Mark v. 25. Luke*
viii. 43.

III. “ As *Jesus* was teaching in one of the Sy-
 “ nagogues on the Sabbath, there was a Wo-
 “ man who had a Spirit of Infirmary eighteen
 “ Years, and was bowed together, and could in
 “ no wise lift up herself. And when *Jesus* saw
 “ her, he called her to him, and said, Woman,
 “ thou art loosed from thine Infirmary ; and
 “ he laid his Hands on her ; and immediate-
 “ ly she was made streight. *Luke xiii. 10.*

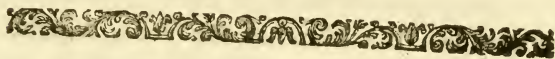
IV. “ At the Feast of the Passover *Jesus*
 “ went up to *Jerusalem*, where was a Pool
 “ called *Bethesda*, at which lay a great Mul-
 “ titude of impotent Folk, of blind, halt,
 “ withered, waiting for the moving of the
 “ Water. For an Angel went down at a certain
 “ Season into the Pool and troubled the Water
 “ and whosoever first after the troubling of
 “ the

“ the Water stepped in, was made whole of
 “ whatsoever Disease he had. Now a certain
 “ Man was there which had an Infirmary thir-
 “ ty and eight Years. And when *Jesus* saw
 “ him lye, and knew that he had been now
 “ a long Time in that Case, he saith unto him,
 “ Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent
 “ Man answered, Sir, I have no Man when
 “ the Water is troubled to put me into the
 “ Pool, and while I am coming, another step-
 “ peth down before me. *Jesus* then saith un-
 “ to him, Arise, take up thy Bed and walk ;
 “ and immediately the Man was made whole,
 “ and took up his Bed and walked.” *John* v. 1.

V. “ Whilst *Jesus* was at *Jerusalem* he saw
 “ a Man that was blind from his Birth. Up-
 “ on which, spitting on the Ground he made
 “ Clay of the Spittle and anointed the Eyes
 “ of the blind Man with the Clay, and said
 “ unto him, Go wash in the Pool of *Siloam*.
 “ The Man went his Way and washed and
 “ received his Sight. *John* ix. 1.

VI. “ When *Jesus* was at *Capernaum*, a
 “ great Multitude resorted to the House where
 “ he was ; insomuch that there was no Room
 “ to receive them, no not so much as about
 “ the Door. And they come unto him bring-
 “ ing one sick of the Palsy, which was born
 “ of four. And when they could not come
 “ nigh

" nigh him for the Throng, they went up to
 " the House top and let him down through
 " the Tiling with his Couch into the midst
 " before *Jesus* ; who seeing their Faith, said
 " to the Sick of the Palsy, Son, thy Sins are
 " forgiven thee ; arise take up thy Bed and
 " go into thine House. And immediately he
 " arose, took up the Bed and went forth be-
 " fore them all ". *Mark* ii. 1. *Luke* v. 17.



THE Cases being thus briefly related,
we are now to enquire,

First, Whether these Cases, as they stand in the Gospels, can be accounted for in a natural Way (as Mr. *W.* does sometimes suppose) and without allowing in our blessed Saviour a Power of working Miracles?

Secondly, Whether these Cases, as they are recorded, stand connected with any such Circumstances, as give any Occasion for the Charge of Absurdity brought against them?

The *first* Case is that of the curing the Madmen ; which is to be considered at present, simply as a cure of Madness, because the Circumstance of casting out the Devils, wherewith they were said to have been possessed, and of the suffering those Devils afterwards

wards to enter into the Herd of Swine, how much soever they may affect the Credibility of the Relation, certainly cannot affect the Reality of the Miracle. For to cure Madness in an Instant, by the speaking of a Word, is a miraculous Thing, whether the Cause of that Madness be supposed to be diabolical Possession or any thing else. For this Question is concerned purely with the Reality of the Distemper, and not with the Cause from whence it proceeds. If a Man has the Gout, whether it proceeds from an evil Habit of Body derived from his Parents, or from an intemperate way of living, or from the Possession of a Devil, yet to cure it by the speaking of a Word, would be equally in any of the Cases, miraculous. Now that these Men were really mad the Account shews; for they *wore no Cloaths, neither abode in any House, but among the Tombs and upon the Mountains.* They were *exceeding fierce, so that no Man could bind them, no not with Chains.* Which are as plain Evidences of Madness as can be. That they were cured is also clear. For when some *came out of the City to see Jesus, they found this Madman sitting and cloathed, and in his right Mind.* So that this Case, at least, as it stands recorded in the Gospel, must be admitted as a plain Instance of a Miracle. To this first Case, the last is not unlike; for here was a Man so much affected with the Palsy as that

he

he was quite unable to help himself, who yet upon *Jesus's* only saying to him *arise*; *arose*; *took up his Bed and walked*. These two Cases the Objector himself has allowed, I think, to be unexceptionable. The Facts he denies, for Reasons which shall be considered in their proper Place. But admitting the Facts, he does not dispute the Miracle, as indeed no one of common Sense can; and I think that Mr. *W's* uncommon Sense does not carry him so far.

In the second, third, and fourth Cases, the Gentleman pursues a different Method. For here he allows the Facts (or seems at least to allow them) but denies the Miracles. Let us take therefore these Cases in order as they stand, and consider his Reasoning.

The first of these three Cases is that of the Woman that was *diseased with an Issue of Blood*. In which says he, * *to please our Divines I will allow as much of the Truth of the Letter of the Story as they can desire*. And in particular, he admits that she was *ἀιμορρῶσα*, *obnoxious to bleeding*; which Distemper he all along supposes to have been of *twelve Years* standing. Nor does he call in Question the particular Manner, in which the Evangelists tell us the Cure was wrought, (namely that it was done in Virtue of the Woman's *touching the Hem of Christ's Garment*;) as if it were falsely reported. Thus

* *Sixth Discourse*, p. 8, 9.

far all is well. Now this being admitted as a true Relation, it will, I believe, puzzle any Man of common Apprehension, to conjecture how the Gentleman goes to work to avoid the Necessity of confessing that here was a Miracle wrought. For to cure a Person of an inveterate Hæmorrhage, to which all the Means of Art had been administred in vain, merely by the Touch of the Hem of a Man's Garment is surely a Miracle, or it will be the hardest thing in the World to say what is a Miracle. But he tells us, that, ** as to the Nature of the Disease of this Woman, we are much in the dark about it, and very uncertain of what Kind and Degree it was—— It might be for ought we know, only a little bleeding at the Nose that now and then she was subject to, or it might be an Obnoxiousness to an Evacuation of Blood, by——* I do not at all think it needful to pursue the learned Conjectures. Be it supposed that this bleeding was from the Nose, or from any other part of the Body; still it was a Disease, and an inveterate Disease, which no Art that she had ever tried could cure. The Gentleman amuses himself to as little Purpose, when he tells us, that the † *Woman subsisting so long under her Issue of Blood—— it could not be very grievous—— That this Hamorrhage was rather, perhaps, of Advantage to the Health of*

* *ibid.* p. 10, 11

† p. 11, 12.

the Patient than of Danger to her—— Yea, that Jesus's cure of this Woman might be a Precipitation of her Death, for (which is the only true Thing he says) *she died some Time after it, rather than a Prolongation of her Life.* You see the Power of Imagination! If you will allow the Gentleman that the Case was what it was not, he will be able to prove that there was no Miracle. The History says, that the Woman had been twelve Years diseased: That no Art, no Skill of the Physician could relieve her. Mr. W. thinks what the Scripture calls a Disease, was her Health and her Life; which is not writing against the old History, but giving us a new one. Surely he is a mystical Physician, as well as a mystical Divine; or else from the plain Scripture History of this Distemper, he never could have raised such Conclusions!

As to his general Assertion, that * *the bodily Disease of the Woman should have been clearly and fully represented to our Understanding, or we can form no Conception of Christ's Power in the cure of it,* I can by no Means agree to it; because it implies that we can never know a Man to be sick, unless we understand the Nature of his Distemper. The Case is quite otherwise. We send for Physicians to our Friends, because we see they are sick, and because we

* p. 13.

do not ourselves understand their Distempers. In some Cases our Physicians are puzzled, and at a Loss to know the Nature of the Patients Disease. In such a Case, which is of all others the most desperate and remediless, will Mr. *W.* say, that there is no Distemper, because no one understands what it is? In the present Case, if a Distemper of twelve Years standing, and which had so long eluded all the Art of Physick, was cured by a single Touch of *Christ's* Garment, is it possible to imagine, that there was nothing miraculous in the cure?

It is scarce worth Notice, what the Gentleman is pleased to suggest as to the Means, by which this Cure was wrought, namely, that the Effect which followed upon the Woman's touching the Hem of *Christ's* Garment, might have been owing purely * *to the Force of Imagination*. No doubt this Woman had before, either been an Eye Witness of *Christ's* miraculous Power of healing Diseases, or had had the Assurances of it from others upon Authorities not to be disputed. Full of this Persuasion she comes to *Christ*, and as the Reward of her Faith God was pleased to grant her, what she wished for, a Release from her bodily Infirmary. It is thus that the Scripture represents the Case. Now if this Gentleman will say that this Cure was not the Effect of the

* *ibid.* p. 14.

miraculous Power of God, but of a strong Imagination ; I know not indeed, as he says, *who can help it*. But there is one Thing, I am sure, which a wise Man will find himself as little able to help, and that is, pitying the Extravagancy of a Thought, which has not the least Appearance of Reason to support it. It is an easy Thing to harangue in general Terms upon the Force of Imagination in certain Cases. But the proper Proof in the Matter before us, would have been to have produced some unquestionable Instance of a Disease, attended with Circumstances parallel to these, which has been cured by Imagination. When the Gentleman has done this, it will be Time enough to consider the Case farther ; and till then, all that he can say will only shew his own Temper and Spirit, but cannot diminish from the Credit of the Story with any who are disposed to consider Cases of this Sort, with any Degree of Judgment and Impartiality.

To go on therefore to the next Case, namely, that of another Woman who had *a Spirit of Infirmary*. This Distemper, whatever it was, is spoken of by our Saviour himself, as inflicted by some evil Spirit. For he tells us, that she had been *bound of Satan for eighteen Years* ; and the visible Effect of this was, that she *was bowed together and could in no wise lift up herself*.

self. Yet upon *Jesus's* laying his Hands on her immediately she was made streight. What says the Gentleman to this? Why * taking the DEVIL out of the Story, there's no more in it than what is common. — Very well Sir; we will drop this Circumstance of the Devil's being concerned in the Case for the present, and see what you will make of it. What is it that you here say is common? Why, that a † drooping, stooping, vaporous Woman, full of Fancies, should be cheared and elated upon the comfortable Advice and Admonition of a reputedly wise and good Man! I think verily, that the Question with the Gentleman upon this Case, is already brought to a very short Issue. The History says, that this Woman was afflicted with a Weakness of eighteen Years Continuance, which had so much disabled her, that she could not stand upright. The Gentleman in Effect says, that this was not the Case, and that the Woman had not really any such Distemper. What now must we believe? Shall we credit those who saw the Woman, and saw the Cure; or must we give Credit to Mr. *W's*. new History of this Woman, which he delivers as confidently indeed as if she had been his intimate Acquaintance, but whom he never saw, of whom he had never heard, but for the History, which he pretends to correct. If he may be allowed to write History

* p. 28.

† p. 27, 28.

out of his own Head, and to throw out of the Story every Thing that is miraculous; he may well say, What is there in this more than common? But does not this shifting the Case shew, to Demonstration, that even in this Writer's own Opinion, here is an Instance of a Miracle impossible to be withstood? It is just in the same Manner that he has treated the fourth Case, which is next to follow; that, I mean, of the *Impotent Man* at the Pool of *Bethesda*. * *The WORST*, says he, *that can be made of this Man's Case is, that he was troubled with Laziness more than Lameness. — Or that if he was no Dissembler, he was only fancifully sick. And the BEST that can be made of Jesus's Power in the Cure of him is, that by some proper and seasonable Talk, he touched his Heart to his Relief, and so by the help of his own Imagination was cured, and went his Way.* The best and the worst that can be made, — From whence? Why from the Scripture History, or he says nothing. But of the Truth of this let the meanest Reader judge. The History says, that he *had an Infirmary thirty eight Years.* Now though it is granted (as he observes) that † *the Word ἀσθενία, Weakness or Infirmary, is a general Name of all Distempers; yet some Distemper or other it certainly signifies, and the Circumstances of the Place shew thus*

* *Third Discourse*, p. 35.

† *ibid* p. 47.

far what this Man's Distemper was, *viz.* That he was some way or other disabled in his Limbs, for he could not get into the Pool *without Help*. So that whatever the Gentleman's private Opinion as to the Nature of this Man's Case may be, (which is nothing at all to the Purpose) the Scripture evidently speaks of it as a real Lameness, which I hope he will not say was capable of being cured merely by the force of Imagination. If the Objector could have produced any Circumstances from the History tending to shew that these Persons labour'd under no real Distemper, this had been something. But since he has not attempted this, and there is indeed not the least shew of any such Inconsistency, I shall venture to set down these two Cases likewise, as what do appear upon the Face of the Scripture-History to be undoubted Instances of *Jesus's* miraculous Power in healing Diseases.

The only Case which now remains to be considered, is that of *Jesus's* Cure of the *Blind-man*; which the Gentleman has been pleased to treat in such a Manner as to leave it very uncertain to his Readers how much of the Fact he admits, and how much he denies. Sometimes he seems to allow that the Man was really blind; at other times, and that not seldom, he intimates as if his Eyes might have been only sore. But that there was any Miracle in this Case he denies absolutely;

lutely ; for, * *Miracle*, says he, *I can see none*. It is not worth the while, to lay together what he says upon the first Head ; for whatever his Meaning is, the Sense of the Scripture is clear and cannot be mistaken. The Man we are there told was *blind*, and *born blind* ; and since nothing is offered to shew the contrary, we must take the Case to have been as it is reported, and then see how the Gentleman will get rid of the Miracle.

He observes in the first Place, that * *we know nothing of the Nature of this poor Man's Blindness, nor what was the Defect of his Eyes ; nor whether it was curable by Art or not ; without which Knowledge*, says he, *it is impossible and unreasonable to assert, that there was a Miracle wrought in the Cure of him*. This is one Instance, among many others, of Mr. W's. great want of Consideration. A broken Bone is a Malady certainly curable by Art ; and yet should any one be able, without the Help of common Applications, to restore a broken Limb instantly ; suppose, by touching it with his Finger, it would be a Miracle. A Miracle is shewn by the Manner of the Cure as well as by the Matter of it. And therefore admit, that this Man's Blindness was indeed curable by Art (which it will be a hard Matter to prove) still if our Saviour cured it with-

* *Fourth Discourse* p. 6.

† *ibid.* p. 7, 8.

out the Use of any Mean's, that have a natural Virtue to cure Blindness ; will any Man be so unreasonable as to say, that the Cure was not Miraculous? Mr. *W.* himself will answer, No. For he tells us he * *will yield—that if Jesus had used no Medicines ; if with only a Word of his Mouth, he had cured the Man, and he had instantaneously recovered as the Word was spoken, here would have been a real and great Miracle, let the Blindness or Imperfection of the Man's Sight be OF WHAT KIND OR DEGREE SOEVER.* To what Purpose then was it to alledge our Ignorance of the Nature of this Man's Blindness, as an Objection against the Miracle? Or what Sort of Opinion must the Gentleman have of his Readers, when he thought that they would bear to be thus treated? Will you now, Sir, be pleased to tell us what it is that you find fault with? Why *Jesus* did not cure this Man's Blindness by speaking a Word, but, it seems, † *used Washings and Ointments and Balsams, which, says he, absolutely spoils and destroys the Credit of the Miracle.* What are these Washings, and Ointments, and Balsams, the Gentleman talks of? *Jesus*, we read, *spat on the Ground, and made Clay of the Spittle, and anointed the Eyes of the blind Man with the Clay, and then bad him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam, that is, in a common River.*

* p. 9.

† *ibid.*

Have these Things any natural Virtue to cure Blindness? He himself would laugh at any one that should say so. For it is but in the very next Page, that he falls into great Admiration, and says ; *A strange and odd Sort of an Ointment, that I believe was never used before or since, for sore and blind Eyes!* I think so too ; and his Ridicule would be very just, if it could be imagined that our Saviour used it as a means, naturally proper to work the Cure he intended. But as it is certain, that *Jesus* could have no such View, the Ridicule must fall upon himself, in alledging this as a Disparagement of the Miracle, which might, for ought we know, as well have been effected without it. For where is the Difference between using no outward Application at all, and using such an outward Application as has no natural Virtue to effect a Cure ?

It would be very easy to observe, that an instantaneous Cure of any Blindness by such kind of Applications, is a Thing that was never heard of. But there is no Occasion to insist upon these Matters ; because it is plain that our Saviour used neither Ointment nor Washing that could have any Virtue in that Case. The Objector is so sensible of this, supposing the Ointment to have been what the History says it was, that, to * *help himself*

* p. 10. 14.

out at a dead lift, in Service of a certain Cause, he seems willing to insinuate, that this Effect might be accounted for, by supposing that Jesus imperceptibly had in his Mouth, a proper unctuous and balsamick Substance, which he dissolved into Spittle. But to make this out, he tells us, he wants the Assistance of some skilful Professors in Physick and Surgery, and wonders that none of them, who may be supposed to be a little disaffected to Christianity, have as yet bent their Thoughts this Way. The certain Cause which the Gentleman has so much at Heart is, I suppose, pretty well understood. But I have known, that even a good Cause has suffered under better Management than this. If I could believe the Gentleman to be in earnest, I would advise him to consult some experienced Physicians and Surgeons, and hear what they have to say. The decent Manner in which he has treated this learned Faculty, with the good Sense of the Question he has to propose to them, no doubt will procure him a Reception suitable to his Merit.

But * *what then*, says the Objector, *was the Reason of Jesus's using this strange Eye Salve*, since it had no medicinal Virtue? To which Question he shall receive an Answer in due Time. At present we have no Occasion to

* p. 12.

consider this Point; because whatever was the Reason, why *Jesus* used this Ointment, the Miracle will stand just as it does. We are therefore got through these six Cases, and it appears that taking them as they are recorded by the Evangelists, they are all of them Miraculous. This was our first Head of Enquiry.

The second is, whether these Cases stand connected with any such Circumstances, as are sufficient to support the Charge of Absurdity laid against them. This is what I am next to consider; and with a View to this Question, I shall once more run over these Cases in the Order in which I have placed them.

The first Case is that of *Christ's* curing the *Madmen*; to which Miracle, there is this Circumstance connected, That *this Madness was occasioned by evil Spirits, who had taken Possession of them; who being cast out, were permitted to enter into a Herd of Swine, who thereupon ran down a Precipice, and were all choaked in the Sea.* In this Circumstance, one Thing perhaps, that may give the Gentleman Offence is, That the Gospel asserts the Being of evil Spirits, and their Agency in bringing bodily Diseases, and other Mischiefs upon Men. He does not indeed offer this as an Objection in direct Terms, in the Story before us: But since he has * elsewhere given us plainly enough

* *Second Discourse* p. 40. to 45.

to understand that he laughs at every Thing of this Kind, it will not be improper once for all to say in a few Words, what may reasonably be said upon this Subject.

It must be observed then, that the Nature of the Argument does not oblige us to set out our Proofs that there are such Beings as evil Spirits, or to determine how far they are concerned in the Affairs of this World. The Gospel supposes such Beings, and that they sometimes are suffered to have an Influence in the Affairs of this World. This is made an Objection against the Authority of the Gospel. To maintain this Objection therefore, those who make it must prove, either that there are no such Beings, or that if there are, they cannot possibly have any thing to do with human Affairs; otherwise the Supposition of such Beings will be no Objection against the Gospel or any part of it. And what can any Man have to say in order to shew that there are no evil Spirits, that is not the Effect of mere Prejudice? When we speak of a Spirit, we speak of an invisible Being. And that there is one invisible Being at least, all must confess who are not downright *Atheists*: For God is, though we see him not. And that there may possibly be a great Variety of invisible Beings as well as one, nothing can hinder any Man from conceiving but a certain Narrowness of Thought, which a very little Philosophy will enable

enable us to conquer, and is incident only to those who are not at all accustomed to think. I doubt not but that if some Gentlemen had lived a hundred Years ago, and had been told of that numberless Variety of imperceptible Animals, that have lately become invisible by the help of Glasses, they would have made as great a Joke of them as they do now of Spirits. If the being of such Animals does not prove the being of Spirits, (as it certainly does not) it will help us to conceive that there may be Spirits; for it shews there are many real Beings that are invisible to us; and is not this the strongest Prejudice against the belief of Spirits, that they are 'invisible? Concerning the Nature or Substance of a Spirit we know nothing more than that it is greatly different from every thing whereof we have any Experience. But this can be no good Objection; for who will say it is not as easy for God to make Creatures of different Substances; as it is to make Creatures of the same Substance differing in Shape and Proportion?

As little room for Objection is there against the Office or Employment which the Gospel assigns to these invisible Beings; namely, their being made use of as Instruments in the Hand of God to execute the Works of his Providence with regard to Men. He hath made the Creatures of the visible World Instruments

both

both of Good and Evil to us, and why not those of the invisible World likewise? Why may not God permit us to be hurt by evil Spirits, as well as by evil Men, or by evil Beasts? Or why may not the Operation of an evil Spirit upon the Body create Distempers, as well as the Operations of many natural Substances? I am persuaded that no Answer can be given to these Questions, which can in the least stand as a Prejudice to the Gospel with reasonable Men. And therefore to go on a little farther. What sticks with some People, I know, is this, That we should hear so much of evil Spirits taking Possession of Mens Bodies, during the Time of the first Publication of the Gospel, and nothing at all of it either before or since. To which the Answer is very plain and easy, that then only were these Beings known and heard of, because then only those Powers were exercised, which alone were able to bring their Doings to Light. The Diseases were visible; but the Cause of them was unknown, till he who wrought the Cure made it evident by his Power what it was. And possibly should the same Power again revive, we might again hear of just the same Effects of it. We know little by our Reason or our Senses, of the being of evil Spirits, or of their Power, and therefore are apt to make no Reckoning of them in considering the possible Causes of those Effects which we

daily

daily see before us; but should any one say, that even now a great many of those Diseases which afflict Mankind, are caused by evil Spirits; Some modern Writers would find much more Use of their Talent for Ridicule, than of their Reason and Understanding, in confuting him.

Let us now come to the Matter in Hand, and try the Weight of the Gentleman's Objection, which must, I think, be conceived to stand thus, *viz.* That * *it is absurd and unreasonable to believe that the Devils or evil Spirits when cast out of the Madmen should be permitted to enter into an Herd of Swine to their Destruction.* This pretended Absurdity is supported by two Observations, *viz.* 1. That there were no Swine kept in that Country. 2. That if there were, *Jesus's* destroying so many Swine by suffering the Devils to enter into them, and drive them into the Sea, was an Act of Injustice. To the first of these Observations it may be answered, that there might be Swine kept in that Country; for that † *Gadara* was inhabited by *Greeks* as well as *Jews* who might both keep and eat Swine; though the *Jews* were forbidden by their Laws to do either. As to the other Observation, I will only ask the Gentleman this plain Question, *viz.* Whether supposing *Jesus* to have been a Prophet, and

* *First Discourse*, p. 33. & seq.

† *Bishop of St. David's Vindict.* p. 199.

in Consequence hereof to have acted by Commission from God, he was, or could be guilty of any Injustice in this Action? It is plain he could not; because upon this Supposition the Act will come to be considered not as his Act, but as an Act of Providence. If *Jesus* had no Right to destroy the Peoples Swine, God, who is the supreme Proprietor of the whole Earth, most certainly had; And will you complain of him for such a Punishment as this, when you every Day see more surprizing Instances before your Eyes? The Gentleman asks, What had this People *done* to * *deserve such Usage from Jesus*? Would the Question be endured if he should ask, What had they done to deserve such Usage from God? Is God accountable to such Reasoners as these, when they shall demand why he punishes, or why he forbears? Or when we see him laying whole Nations waste with Pestilence, with Famine and with Earthquakes, shall we confess his sovereign Authority in these Cases, and yet upon the Loss of *two thousand Swine* cry out and say, Why hast thou done thus? If you are inclined to doubt of the divine Commission of *Christ*, yet it must be for other Reasons and not for this. For it can be no Reason for denying his divine Commission, because he once or twice did the same

* *ibid.* p. 34.

Thing which God does daily. And upon this Occasion I cannot help wishing, that those who seem to call in Question the Authority of the Christian Religion, and yet pretend to be real Deists, would take Care that they do not in their Zeal against Revelation advance such Notions, which must, if there be any Thing in them, entirely subvert the belief of a Providence and all natural Religion.

It is hardly worth while to take Notice of some other little Circumstances in this Story, which the Gentleman has been pleased to set down as Objections against the Credibility of it. As, * *How came those Madmen to have their Dwelling among the Tombs of a burying Ground? Where was the Humanity of the People that did not take care of them?* I presume the Gospel History may stand very safe though we cannot answer for the Actions of Madmen; and if the meaning of the Objection is only this, that the People of the Country ought to have been more careful than to permit Persons in this Condition to wander up and down where they pleased; this likewise may be admitted without Prejudice to the Evangelists. For what? Is not an Historian to be credited, unless we can in every minute Circumstance account for the Conduct of all whom the History concerns? I wish the Gentleman would try his critical Skill

* p. 32.

upon some other Writers and see what Consequences would arise in Virtue of such notable Observations as these. If some Author of good Account should tell us of a wild Bull that had broke loose from his Keepers, and done great Mischief among the People; such a Story, I suppose, might easily enough find Credit, because there is scarcely a Country in which Instances of this kind do not sometimes happen. And yet should this Objector take in Hand to disparage such a Writer, might he not cry out with the very same Reason that he does here, Is it possible? What sort of People were these, that they did not tie him up fast, or knock him o' the Head? I do not find that these poor Creatures had really hurt any Body, but only that the People were afraid of them; nor does it appear but that reasonable Care had been taken to prevent Mischief. For the History says, that these Men had been *often bound with Fetters and Chains, but that no Chains would hold them.* This says the Gentleman *is hardly credible.* Perhaps so, to him, who considers this only as a common Case of Madness. But if he admits (what the History says) that evil Spirits were concerned, he will not, I presume, pretend to determine the Extent of their Power. Besides by this Expression we are not obliged to understand any more than that the usual Methods of chaining and fettering

Mad-

Mad-men had been tried, but to no Purpose ; which I suppose no reasonable Man will say is so strange a Thing as to surpass all Credibility. And were it such an Impossibility for Mad-men in any Country to be at Liberty, perhaps we should not have had the Trouble of considering these Objections.

But there is one Objection more, which may perhaps seem to have greater Weight in it, and that is this * *When our Saviour was brought before Pilate to be arraigned, tryed, and condemned, Pilate put this Question to the Jews, saying, What Evil hath he done ? Upon which the Gentleman observes, that if this Story had been literally true of Jesus, there had been no need of false Witnesses against him ; for the Gadarens might have deposed, that he had destroyed two thousand of their Swine.* But perhaps the People of that Country, had not learn'd to call that *Injustice*, in which they plainly saw the Hand of God, and therefore were not disposed themselves to complain. And as for the chief Priests, they had good Reason not to put the Cause upon this Issue. If the Loss of these Swine had been pleaded, the first Question would have been, how did *Jesus* destroy them ? And this would have led directly to an Inquiry into his Miraculous Power, a Point which, as their whole Conduct upon

* p. 38.

this Occasion shews, the *Jews* were resolutely determined not to meddle with. What Sort of an Advocate this Gentleman might have been for the *Jews*, if he had been there, I cannot tell. If he had believed any Thing of evil Spirits, he might consistently enough with his own Opinion, have said * *that he believed Christ to be a Wizzard, and that the Swine were lost through his Fascinations.* But the *Jews* could with no Sort of Decency have objected in this Manner. *Beelzebub* was the common Cry, when they wanted something to say : But this was not a Plea to be trusted too, since they had nothing to alledge against *Jesus*, upon this particular Case, to shew that he made use of a diabolical Power, which would not have fallen harder upon some of their own Prophets. They could not have forgot what *Moses*, in whom they trusted, did to *Corah* and all his Company, whom he sent down alive into the Earth, which opened her Mouth to swallow them up. (*Numb. xvi.*) Nor what *Elijah* did, when he commanded Fire to come down from Heaven, and consume a hundred Men, whom *Abaziah* sent to apprehend him. (*2 King. i. 10.*) Nor what his Successor *Elisha* did, when he called forth two Bears out of the Wood, who tare in Pieces two and Forty Children. (*2 King. ii. 23.*) These

* p. 39.

and some other Instances of Severity, executed by their Prophets, they must have remembered : And what was the Loss of two Thousand Swine to such Destructions as these ? No wonder then if they chose to avoid an Argument, which might so easily have been turned upon themselves, and had recourse to general Accusations of Sedition and Disaffection to *Cæsar*, that common Artifice, by which Thousands have been destroyed or ill treated, whose only Faults have been, that their Virtues were too considerable.

Other Answers might be given to this Objection, but I take this one to be sufficient ; and since the Gentleman has once again called us, to the Consideration of the Matters objected to our Saviour at his Tryal before *Pilate*, I will beg leave in my Turn, to propose one Difficulty to him, which he may consider of at his Leisure. He tells us that *Jesus* was a Cheat. If so, he was surely the most lucky Impostor that ever was, if amidst such an Infinite Variety of Impostures (for so we must now call all his Miracles) he was not sometimes detected. The Gentleman says, that he was detected in the Case of *Lazarus* : And it seems utterly incredible, that he should not have been detected in many other, if any Thing was to be discovered that was otherwise than it ought to have been. Why then this deep Silence upon this Head, and why
so

so much suborning of Witnesses in other Cases? Why so much Strefs laid upon a few mistaken Words of his about *destroying the Temple*, and why not one Word upon these manifest Cheats? What was a general Charge of Sedition and Disaffection compared to a Proof that he was a common Cheat, and had endeavoured by Craft and Artifice to make himself popular? But to return.

The two following Cases will give us little Trouble. In the Story of the Woman that was *diseased with an Issue of Blood* the Gentleman has found no Circumstances to cavil at: Nor in that of the other Woman that was *bound down by a Spirit of Infirmary*, unless it be that the Devil was concerned in the Matter; which is a Point that has been already spoken to. But the History of the lame Man that was cured at the Pool of *Bethesda* is full, it seems, of * *Ab-surdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities*, which have furnished him with much Matter of Ridicule. His principal Objections lie against what we find in St. *John's* Gospel concerning this Pool of *Bethesda*; as that *an Angel went down at a certain Season into the Pool and troubled the Water*; and that *whosoever first, after the Troubling of the Water, stepped in, he was made Whole of whatsoever Disease he had*. But what is all this to our Saviour? Has he

* *Third Discourse*, p. 34.

said one Word about the Pool, or the Virtues of it? Suppose the Pool had no Virtue, Was the Man therefore not Lame? Or was he therefore not cured by our Saviour? Whatever therefore becomes of this Story, our Saviour, it is certain, stands quite clear of it: For when he came to the Pool, and saw the lame Man lying there, he only asked him, Whether he *would be made whole*? and, having heard what he had to say, bad him *rise and take up his Bed and walk*. But concerning the Virtue of this Pool in curing Diseases, what it was, or whence it came, he says not one Word. If there be any Difficulty in the Case, St. *John*, the Writer of the History, is to answer for it, and perhaps he may have less to answer for than Mr. *W.* imagines.

For in the first Place there is some Reason to suspect that the Passage about the Angel's Descent into the Pool and troubling the Water, at which Mr. *W.*'s Ridicule is chiefly pointed, is no Part of St. *John*'s original Gospel. In some ancient Manuscripts it is entirely wanting; in others not admitted into the Body of the Text, but set down in the Margin by some later Hand, as the learned Reader may find by consulting Dr. *Mills*, and his Editor Dr. *Kuster*, to whom it will be enough to refer him for farther Satisfaction*.

* Vid. Milli Prolegom. ad Nov. Test. 433. & Kuster in Præfat.

But to give the *English* Reader a clear Notion of this Matter, I will set down this Passage in our Translation, as it is represented in a very ancient *Greek Manuscript* in the * King of France's Library.

Verf. 2. *There is at Jerufalem by the Sheeps Market a Pool which is call'd in the Hebrew Tongue Bethesda, having five Porches.*

Verf. 3. *In these lay a great Multitude of impotent* * *Waiting for the Moving of the Waters.*
*Folk, Blind, Halt, Withered, **

Verf. 4. *For an Angel went down at a certain Season into the Pool and troubled the Water — whoſoever then firſt, after the Troubling of the Water, ſtepped in, was made whole of what Diſeaſe ſoever he had.*

Verf. 5. *And a certain Man was there which had an Infirmity thirty and eight Years.*

Verf. 6. *When Jeſus ſaw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long Time in that Caſe, he ſaith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?*

Verf. 7. *The impotent Man answered, Sir, I have no Man when the Water is troubled to put me into the Pool, but while I am coming another ſteppeth down before me, &c.*

* Vid. Montfaucon Palæog. Græc. p. 214.

You see now that the Narration, as it stands without the marginal Note, contains a full and perfect Sense, and gives an Account of the whole Action of our Saviour so far as it concerned the lame Man and his Cure. It is very true that the seventh Verse implies some such Notion as the fourth distinctly Specifies, *viz.* That upon a certain *troubling of the Waters* there was a Cure wrought or expected to be wrought upon the Person that could first get into the Pool, which was the Reason that brought these sick Persons together. If you should infer from hence, that St. *John* wrote the fourth Verse, I think you would infer too much. For perhaps when St. *John* wrote, the Notion which brought these People to the Pool might be so well understood, that he might not think it needful to give a particular Account of it. But as the ancient Tradition began to wear off, such an Explication was necessary to make the lame Man's talk to our Saviour, at the seventh Verse, intelligible, which, without such Explication, 'tis certain, would not at this time of day have been understood. This might be the Reason why, in some Copies, it was at first inserted in the Margin of the Book; and how easily it might from thence, by degrees, creep into the Text every one understands, who knows how frequent such Instances are in many ancient Writers.

I shall leave it to the Reader to judge of this Account according to his Discretion. I think it cannot be denied, that it has at least an Appearance of Probability. Let us then consider the Case upon this Foot, and see how it will stand. You say, you cannot believe that an Angel went at certain Seasons into the Pool and troubled the Water for the Benefit of a single Person. Well, let it alone. Our Saviour, you have seen, in every View stands clear of the Matter; and if the foregoing Conjecture be admitted, so will the Evangelist, who only reports what the lame Man said. He certainly had such a Notion as this, and so had many others, or they had never come thither for a Cure: And if you should ask, Whether this Notion was true or false? my Answer is, That it is nothing to the Purpose. For admit that this was only a vulgar Superstition; Is it any Objection against our Saviour, that he cured a poor superstitious Man of his Lameness? Or against the Evangelist, That he reported, without disguise, his Conversation with our Saviour? You may think it incredible, perhaps, that there should have been any such Superstition. But go into *Italy*, *Spain*, or *Portugal*, and you may see as strange Things every Day; and in a lower Degree too much of it may be seen even in our own Country.

But to wave all this, and to suppose this Account to be St. *John's* own. What must we say now? Why says the Gentleman, that here is an Account of an incredible Miracle. Why incredible? If all Miracles are incredible, this may be so too; but it is no more incredible than others are. If a Man reports only common Things that happen every Day, no one alive will say he reports Miracles; and therefore the very Nature of a Miracle requires, that the Matter of it should contain something uncommon, *i. e.* (as our Author will say) something incredible. We cannot move Waters, and by moving them, give them a medicinal Virtue; but does it follow that God cannot? The Waters of *Jordan* at OUR Command will not cure a Leprosie; but does it follow that *Naaman* the Syrian was not healed, when he used this Remedy by God's Command? If you ask, why such a Miracle was vouchsafed the Jews in their worst and most corrupted State? I will answer you, when you tell me why they were preserved in the Wilderness after their many Rebellions against God. Even in the common Acts of Providence it is easy to see the Work, but often hard to see the Reason. In miraculous Works, which are out of the common Road of Nature, it must be much more so: Which Observation may serve also for an Answer to a Question of Mr. *W's*, Why *one* sick

sick Person only was cured by the moving of the Waters, when there were many who wanted it? He has other Questions also which I will repeat, that I may not seem to forget them ; As *How often in a Week, Month, or Year did the Angel vouchsafe his Descent into the Pool ? For how many Ages before Christ's Advent ; and why not since, and even now, was this gracious angelical Favour granted ?* To all which, I answer, that I cannot resolve his Doubts : But surely, God may dispense his own Gifts, in what Manner, and in what Measure he pleases, and is not bound to satisfy the Curiosity of such forward and busy Inquirers as this, when they shall think fit to demand a Reason of his Proceedings. Why is it a greater Objection against this Miracle, that the *Angel* cured but one, than it is against *Christ's* Miracle, that *HE* cured but one? There were many infirm Persons at the Pool when he came, and yet but one of them was healed. Right, says the Gentleman, and therefore I will believe neither the one nor the other. * *If Christ COULD not cure them all, there is a End of his Power of Miracles ; and if he WOULD not, it was want of Mercy and Compassion in him. Which Way soever we take this Case it turns to the Dishonour of Jesus !* He that can want an Answer to such reasoning as this,

* P. 59.

I think is hardly capable of any. That *Jesus* could have cured all those sick Persons, and all sick Persons in the World besides, with as much Ease as he cured that one, no body can doubt. And could not God, whose Minister he was, have as easily done the same Thing at any Time, either before or since? Can he not do it as easily even now, or at any Time hereafter? *If he CANNOT there is an End of his Godhead. If he WILL not, it is want — Of what ! Mercy and Compassion* you say. Does then the Mercy and Compassion of God oblige him not to permit Sicknefs and Diseases in the World? The Gentleman pretends to be a Christian, but this is certainly the Language of pure Atheism.

But to speak clearly to this Case; the true Use of Miracles is to give Evidence of the Power of God for some particular Ends of his Providence. And whatever was the Intent of the Angel's descending into the Water (if he really did descend) this we are sure, that the end of this Manifestation of the Divine Power by the Miracles of *Jesus* was to give the Sanction of his Authority to the Doctrine he was to publish in his Name. Now though one Miracle requires as much Power as a hundred, yet a Variety of Miracles renders the Evidence of this Power more conspicuous, and the Credit of those who should record them to Posterity less liable to Suspicion, than it would
have

have been if one only had been wrought and recorded ; and this, I presume, may be admitted as a general Reason why *Jesus* wrought many Miracles and not one Miracle only. But if you should ask, Why so many and no more? Or why upon this Person and not upon another was this Divine Power manifested? These are Questions not to be answered, nor is there any Sense in requiring or expecting that they should. Because as God is absolute Master of his own Gifts, so he best knows when and upon whom to bestow them. To this Purpose the Words of our Saviour himself (*Luke iv. 25.*) are pertinent and strong. *I tell you of a Truth, many Widows were in Israel in the Days of Elias, when the Heaven was shut up three Years and six Months, when great Famine was throughout all the Land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta a City of Sidon, unto a Woman that was a Widow. And many Lepers were in Israel in the Time of Elisæus the Prophet: And none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.* This was said in Answer to his Countrymen, who asked him (or were ready enough to ask him) Why he did not work Miracles among them as well as at *Capernaum*? And the Sense of the Passage is to this Effect, viz. “ That they had no
 “ Right to demand a Reason in this Case ; for
 “ that God would act according to his own sovereign Will, and had done so in Instances
 “ acknow-

“ acknowledged by themselves ”. It is not to be supposed that the Gentleman believes these Miracles appealed to by our Saviour, any more than he believes those which were wrought by our Saviour himself. But no Matter for that. The Answer in all these Cases is one and the same, *viz.* That God may do what he pleases, and is not bound to give us a Reason why he does it; and surely if there are any Cases in which it is meet for us to submit to his Wisdom, this is one. I wonder the Gentleman, when he was considering the *Resurrection Miracles*, did not offer this Objection, and say that he would not believe that *Jesus* raised any one from the dead, because he did not raise all. But this Reasoning he there disclaims, and confesses that * *two or three Instances will be sufficient*. But why *Jesus* was more obliged to heal all the Sick than to raise all the Dead, it will be proper for him to shew; and let him shew it when he can.

It appears then, that *Jesus's* curing that one Man only among the Multitude, that lay at the Pool of *Bethesda*, is no Objection against the Credibility of this Miracle. And how the Angel's curing but one by his Descent into the Pool is a greater Objection against the Credibility of that Miracle, it will be very

* *Fifth Discourse*, p. 20.

hard to shew. The great Difficulty lies here ; To what End or Purpose did that Miracle serve? This the History does not at all explain, and it may perhaps be no easy Matter to determine upon any sure Grounds. To have Recourse to any typical Use would avail little with this Writer, who, as fond as he seems to be of mystical Interpretations, will admit of no Types but his own. All I shall say to the Matter therefore is this, that there might be a Reason for this Miracle though we know not what it is.

Upon the whole then, if this Passage relating to the Angel's Descent into the Water be an ancient Interpolation, as perhaps it may, Mr. *W.* has been fighting with a Shadow, and all his Arrows have fallen short of the Mark which he aimed at, the Credit of *Christ* or his Evangelist. But if the Passage be St. *John's* own, it is certain we are not answerable for more than St. *John* has said, and he has barely related the Fact, (which considered as a Miracle can never be proved to be absurd or incredible) But to what Purpose the Miracle was intended, or when it began, how often it was repeated, or when it ceased, or why it was confined to one Person only, he has not told us ; and I know no Obligation we are under from our common Faith as *Christians* to answer such Questions.

To go on now to the fifth Case, which is that of our Saviour's *restoring the blind Man to his Sight by anointing his Eyes with Clay, &c.* What the Gentleman has to object against the Miracle in this Case has been already seen: What we are now in search after is, Circumstances, if any such there are, which affect the Credibility of the Relation, or which stand as an Objection against our admitting the Fact to have been as the Evangelist has here represented it. One Circumstance then of this Sort I meet with, and but one, which is *Jesus's*
 * *using this Ointment made of Dirt and Spit*, which, says the Objector, *if it had no Effect in the Cure* (as for certain it had none) *was a vain and trifling Operation*, or, as he speaks elsewhere, *absurd, senseless, and unaccountable*. In this Objection, the Gentleman must be understood as affirming, that it was Senseless and Absurd that Cases of this sort should be attended with any external Action or Operation which had not some natural Effect in the Cure; which is certainly the most senseless Thing he could have said. He himself confesses, as you have before seen, that *if Jesus had cured the Man only with a Word of his Mouth, here would have been a great Miracle*, and he does not pretend to object any Absurdity or Incongruity against the Relation so cir-

* *Fourth Discourse*, p. 15, 22.

cumstantiated. But if an Absurdity in using
 this Ointment is to be inferred merely from
 its Insignificancy with respect to the Cure,
 the same Absurdity might as reasonably have
 been objected if our Saviour had only *spoke a*
Word; for the speaking of a Word no more
 avails to the Cure of Blindness, than the Use
 of such an Ointment as this can be supposed
 to do. One would think that it were no easy
 Matter for any Man to mistake in so clear a
 Case as this. *Jesus*, in restoring a blind Man
 to his Sight, makes use of an Ointment which
 had no natural Virtue to cure Blindness; and
 upon this the Gentleman asks, Why he used
 this Ointment? The same *Jesus* in restoring
 another blind Man to his Sight, only says,
Receive thy Sight; which Words have no na-
 tural Virtue to cure Blindness neither: And
 may it not then as reasonably be asked, Why
 he spake them? In this latter Case, I suppose,
 every body would find a ready Answer, and
 say, That *Jesus* spake these Words to give
 Evidence that a Miracle was wrought, and
 that he was the Person who wrought it. A
 blind Man's coming suddenly to his Sight,
 abstracted from the Agency of any Person, as
 foreknowing or foreseeing the Event, is either
 no Miracle at all, or if it be a Miracle, has
 not the Appearance or Evidence of a Miracle:
 But if such an Effect follows in Consequence of
 any Act or Operation performed by any Per-
 son

son as Declarative of what will happen, this shews both the Miracle and the Worker. When *Jesus* said to the blind Man, *Receive thy Sight*; he only declared what was to follow; and this Declaration being verified by the Event, proved the Miracle. If *Peter* or *John* had said the same Words, and the same Effect had followed, the Miracle would have been the same, but with this Difference, that *Peter* or *John* would have been the Worker, and not *Jesus*. May not all this as well be applied to the Use of the Ointment under Consideration? It was an external Action, declarative of our Saviour's Intention to cure the Man; and accordingly he was cured. And the Action of *Jesus* was as significant and expressive of what he intended to do, as if he had said in so many Words, *Receive thy Sight*: So that the only remaining Question is this, Whether of several outward Actions equally demonstrative of his divine Power, he might not, consistently with Reason and good Sense, chuse which he had a Mind to: A Question which I shall leave every Man to answer for himself.

The Sixth and only remaining Case, is that of our Saviour's curing a Man that was Sick of the Palsy, who, says the History, was borne of four: And when they could not come nigh him for the Throng, they went up to the House-top, and let him down through the Tiling, with his Couch, into the Midst before *Jesus*.

Jesus. This Circumstance has given the Objector so much uneasiness, that he scarce knows where to End his Complaints: But, in short, he tells us, That * *the Story of this Miracle — is such an Accumulation of Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities, that a Man of the most easy Faith, if he at all thinks, cannot digest it.* Let us consider the Particulars, and see what these Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities, are.

The first Circumstance that the Evangelist takes Notice of is, that *when Jesus was at Capernaum, and it was noised abroad, that he was in the House ; many were gathered together, insomuch, that there was no Room to receive them, no not so much as about the Door.* Mark ii. 1, 2. One would hope, that this Part of the Story at least might appear credible ; and yet it seems the Gentleman knows not well how to digest it. For † *what did they so throng and press for ? Was it to see Jesus ? — Or to hear him preach ? — Or to behold him working Miracles ?* I suppose so, Sir. One, or all these Inducements may reasonably enough be presumed to have occasioned this Concourse of People ; and if the Gentleman is determined to go on in his learned Way, in proving by Mood and Figure that this was not at all worth their while, and that they might have employed

* *ibid.* p. 61.

† p. 53, 54.

themselves better ; I shall be very easy with this, till he can likewise shew, that the People of *Capernaum* were not of a different Opinion ; for this Matter depends upon their Way of thinking, and not upon Mr. *W*'s ; and they did no more in this Case, than what the People of any Country in the World, would do in a like Case. The Gentleman is pleased to observe that Jesus, as a Prophet, was without Honour at *Capernaum* his own Country, which is his Mistake. *Capernaum* is called his own City, as he had lately chose it for the Place of his Abode : But his Country, that is the Place of his Education, where he had lived from his coming out of *Egypt*, till his Entrance upon his publick Ministry, is well known to have been *Nazareth*. It was of this Place that our Saviour spake when he said that *a Prophet had no Honour in his own Country* ; and of this Place likewise that it is said, that *he did not many mighty Works there, because of their unbelief*. But is it credible that Jesus should have been without Honour at *Capernaum*, which had been the Scene of some of the most wonderful Transactions of his Life ? Or is it incredible, that when he had been absent from them for a while, and but newly returned, the People (who doubtless had likewise heard of his Fame abroad) should croud about the House where he was to see and to hear him ? It is a Shame that we should be put upon asking such Questions

tions as these ; but the Gentleman's Head is so full of Mysteries, that he forgets the most obvious Passages in his Bible, and is a Stranger to the most common Observations upon human Life.

To go on. In Consequence of this Croud about the Door ; the History farther says, that those who were bringing the sick Man to Jesus, *could not come nigh him.* How ? Says the Gentleman. * *Would not the People make Way for the Lame, Blind, and Paralytic, to come to Jesus ? Was not this frustrating their own Hopes and Expectations of seeing Miracles wrought ?* What is this to the Purpose ? The People he says *acted unreasonably.* Be it so ; yet he should not have said, that they acted *more unreasonably than ever Mob did, or can be supposed to do ;* because there is not a Creature, that has ever seen what he calls a Mob, that does not know the contrary. Was the Gentleman, I wonder, never in *Westminster-Hall* ? If he has, I suppose, he may have observed many crouding up to the Bar, and jostling out those that have had more Business there than themselves ; and perhaps too, it may have been found that in some remarkable Cases, such Tumults have been raised, that one half of those who came to hear the Tryal, have not been able to understand one Word that the Judge or

* P. 54.

Witnesses have said. Hundreds of Instances like this are seen every Day, where great Throngs of People by their over Eagerness, and Impatience, have frustrated those Hopes and Expectations which brought them together — But it is doing too much Credit to a mean and trivial Objection to answer it seriously ; and therefore to proceed to the only Circumstance in this Story, which looks any thing strange, their lifting up the sick Man to the Top of the House, and letting him down through the Roof. The first Question that the Gentleman asks upon this is, * *What need was there of such Haste, and Pains to get to Jesus for a Cure?* What if there was no Need of so much Haste ? Is the Evangelist not to be believed, because the Man did a needless Thing ? What shall we make of Numberless Facts credibly reported by Historians if we admit such Cavils as these ? But perhaps if the poor Man was here to answer for himself, he would say, That he was afraid that before he might find an Opportunity of getting in at the Door, *Jesus* might have withdrawn himself privately to another Place, which was no unusual Thing with him : And if there was any other possible Way of coming at him, who will blame the Man that he was glad to make use of it ? But † *the main Question is, Whether such an*

* P. 55.

† P. 56.

Enterprize as the Evangelist here speaks of *was or could be feisable?* I have no Conception, says the Gentleman, of the Possibility of it. For, adds he, if they could not get into the Door of the House for the Press, OF CONSEQUENCE they could not come at the Sides of it; which is just as good Reasoning as if he should have said, that if there were People enough abroad to cover five Rods of Ground, of Consequence there were enough to cover threescore. All that can be gathered from the History is, that the Door-way and Places near adjoining, were very much thronged, which is natural enough in all such Cases. But what then? Does it follow from hence, that no part of the House besides was accessible; or that there was *no coming at the Sides of it but over the Peoples Heads?* The Gentleman set out with a Resolution to find Impossibilities in this Story, or he could never have thought of such Consequences as these. I will beg Leave then to suppose it very credible, that the sick Man might some Way or other have been easily conveyed to the Walls of the House; and what shall we do with him now? Mr. W. makes a heavy Rout about * *Pullies and Ropes, and Ladders, and Hauling and Heaving*, as if the poor Man had been to be hoisted up to the Top of *Pauls*. But that such Engines as these

* P. 57.

were at all necessary, he can never prove. Whatever else was wanting, *Hands* certainly were not. His Bearers were four, and when they came there, I suppose, they might meet at least with half a Dozen or half a Score more, who, admitting that the House was flat roofed, and not above eight or nine Foot high (which are Circumstances not at all unlikely) might by the Help of any common Conveniency easily get him up to the Top of it. The Gentleman is pleased to say, that it *† is not of much Consequence, in this Case, of what Height the House was: A Mistake in which, I presume, any common Labourer may be able to set him right. Yet he does not care, I find, that it should be thought to have been a very low one. For ancient and modern Commentators (to whom he pays the utmost Deference when they will serve his Purpose) are, it seems, pretty well agreed that it was an upper Room where Jesus was; and consequently the House was at least two Stories high. He does not tell us who these Commentators are. But whoever they are I am very suspicious that they knew as little of the Matter as the Gentleman himself. That Jesus had any House of his own, I suppose no Commentators have told him; and whose House this was the History does not say. But it is very likely that it was the House of Simon and Andrew, who*

† *ibid.*

(as we find, *Mark* i. 29.) had a House in that City whereto *Jesus* resorted; and I am not perfectly satisfied that *Fishermen* at that Time a Day dwelt in Houses two Stories high. Dr. *Lightfoot* says, that it * *was customary for the Pharisees and the Doctors of the Law, when they discoursed of the Law or Religion to go into the upper Chamber*; and supposes therefore that *Jesus* was now in an upper Chamber sitting with the *Pharisees* and *Doctors*, who (as *St. Luke* reports, *Chap.* v. & 17.) *came out of every Town of Galilee, &c.* I shall not dispute whether this Passage of *St. Luke* relates to the present Story, which perhaps may be justly questioned. What I observe is, that Dr. *Lightfoot* does not say, nor indeed can it be said, that our Saviour *never* discoursed with the *Pharisees* and *Doctors* but in an upper Chamber; for the contrary is evident from many Places. If there was no upper Room in this House, they could not sit in an upper Room, whether there was or not the History is silent; and consequently, that this House was two Stories high cannot be affirmed upon any certain Grounds. But what if it was two Stories high? Does this Gentleman know what Convenience the *Jews* had to get up to the Tops of their Houses from without. The very same Commentator (whom Mr. *W.* has lamely quoted) tells us of two Ways into an

* In loc.

House; one called *the Way through the Gate*, or *Door*; and the other *the Way through the Roof*. And he gives an Instance of one that *was dead*, whom because *his Bier could not be carried out thro' the Door, which was too strait, they let down thro' the Roof, or thro' the Way of the Roof*. And cannot any one of common Apprehension as easily conceive how a sick Man might be lifted up to the Top of the House, as how a dead Man might be let down from it? Let us suppose then the *Paralytic* conveyed to the Top of the House (which he very easily might, for aught that appears to the contrary) what now remains? Why only to get him down into the Room; in which I hope there will be no great Difficulty. St. Luke says, that they *let him down through the Tiling with his Couch*. St. Mark says, that they *broke up the Roof and let down the Bed*; which Words, whether they are consistent or not consistent with supposing, that they only made the common Roof-door a little wider, and let him down through that, it is not worth while to dispute. Let us suppose the Meaning to be (as the Gentleman would have it to be) that *they made a Hole capacious enough for the Man and his Bed to be let through*. Where is the Absurdity of this? As to the Bed, it needs not give him any Disturbance: For we are not to suppose, that the *Beds or Couches* in those Eastern Countries, (which, as the sacred History shews,

shews, a Man might carry about him) were Things stuffed with Feathers like ours : They were probably of the Thickness and Size of a common Carpet ; and something of this Sort was necessary to let a Man down in, who was in no Condition to help himself. But for the *Tiles* and *Rafters* — Why here is the Difficulty, and the Gentleman makes as much a Stir about them, as if the House were a going to be pulled down about their Ears, and all the Company in danger of being knocked o' the Head. But as to this Matter he may be at Rest too. Of what Dimensions the Tiles were we cannot tell, they might be very broad and lightly laid on, and possibly the removing half a Dozen might do the Business. And as to the Rafters which supported the Covering, let him prove that there was a Necessity of Removing any of them, which he can never do without shewing (which is impossible) that the Space between each Timber was not wide enough to receive the Body of a Man properly disposed. So that the Question, so far as the
 * Possibility of the Fact is concerned, is, I

† The Possibility of this Fact depends entirely upon the Manner of Building in that Country, which was certainly very different from ours. Whoever will consult *Lamy de Tabernaculo*, Lib. II. Cap. 6. Sect. 2. will find every Circumstance that I have supposed in order to solve the Difficulties of this Story, confirmed by good Authority ; as that the *Jewish* Houses had Stairs without,

hope,

hope, now quite at an End. But † *where was the good Man of the House all this while?* Says the Gentleman in a Chafe. *Why would he suffer his House to be thus broken up?* Perhaps he could not help it, Sir; or perhaps he had so much Humanity as to consent that it should be done. Some Damage there might be; but if the Master of the House was content with it, who else has any Right to find fault?

The Gentleman is pleased farther to inquire; *Whether Jesus could not have made the Access to himself more easy? Whether he could not have desired, or even forced the People to make Way for this poor Man and his Bearers? Or whether, to prevent this Trouble and Damage, he might not have ascended to the House Top, and there have spoke the healing Word?* But it were lost Time to stay to give a distinct Answer to such mere Impertinencies as these; the plain Sense and Construction of the whole being in short, neither more nor less than this, That this Gentleman pretends to be wiser than God, and thinks

leading up to the Top; that the Roofs of them were not ridged but flat; that the Tiles were large, like our *Dutch Tiles*, and so disposed that they might be removed at Pleasure; all which Circumstances, being supposed the Difficulty vanishes at once; which I thought fit to note thus briefly to save the Trouble of entring into many Particulars. Modern Travellers also assure us, that the Houses in those parts are at this Day low built and flat roofed. See *Sandys*, p. 36. 149, 160.

† *ibid.* p. 58.

that

that he knows what was proper to be done in this Case better than he. So that having now considered all Mr. *W.*'s particular Objections, I shall close this Discourse with some general Observations, which may be proper to be born in Mind, in considering not only these Cases, but all other Cases of the like Sort, which are recorded in the Gospels.

It has elsewhere been observed, that there are two Points upon which the Credit of an Historian stands, his Knowledge and his Integrity. As to the first there is no room to pretend, that the Evangelists had not Opportunity to satisfy themselves whether these Cures were wrought or not: Skill in Diseases the Apostles had none: Nor is it at all necessary to support the Credit of their Relations, that they should have had any. Eyes and Understandings they certainly had, in Vertue of which they were Judges, as all Men else are, of the common Appearances of Distempers; such as Madness, Blindness, Lameness, Crookedness, and the like. Some Distempers, 'tis true, may be counterfeited, whereof we have every Day a great many Examples: And whether the Appearances, in any of these Cases, were such as could not be counterfeited, it is a very difficult Matter to determine. But that in fact they were not counterfeited we have all the Reason in the World to say. For why do Men counterfeit Diseases? Why generally to serve themselves

themselves with a Pretence for Idleness and Begging. But this could not be the Case of any of these Persons ; for Cheats of this Sort are never known to apply themselves to others, as wanting the Benefit of a Cure. It would not be less absurd to say, that these Persons were Confederates with *Jesus*, and counterfeited these Distempers to give him a Name among the People as a Worker of Miracles. For besides that no Reason can be given why they should have entred into any such Confederacy, but a great many to the contrary, it was impossible that they should have succeeded in any such Attempt. For no Man can be blind, lame, deaf, and the like, for any considerable Time, but all who know him must likewise be acquainted with his Condition. And therefore had it been pretended by any Person that he was born blind, or that he had been some Way or other disabled in his Limbs, suppose, for ten, twenty or thirty Years, and had been cured by *Jesus*, the Cheat must presently have been discovered ; for many would have been ready to have born witness, that they well knew this Person, but never understood that he laboured under any such Distemper. There is therefore no shew of Probability in saying that the Apostles were deceived, or could have been deceived in judging whether these Cures were wrought or not. That the Persons became sound and whole they saw plainly before their Eyes. If

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they

they had doubted whether the Distempers, which in Appearance they had, immediately before the supposed Cures were wrought, were real or counterfeited, they might easily satisfy themselves in this Point by enquiring of the By-standers and Relations ; and admitting the Apostles to have been Men of Probity and Integrity, and that they had any Regard upon what Grounds they themselves accepted *Jesus* as the Messiah, it is necessary to suppose that they did so, unless (which is most probable) the general Acquiescence and Suffrage of the People who knew the Persons and their Cases, made such an Enquiry needless. If you say that the Apostles were not deceived in these Cases (which they knew well enough to be Cheats) but joined themselves in Confederacy with *Jesus* to carry on an Imposture (which is all that is now left to say) this will bring us to the other Question concerning the Apostles Fidelity ; and if this could with any Reason be called in Question, there would be an end of these Miracles and of all the rest. But not to repeat those general Arguments which have heretofore been offered to shew that the Apostles could have no Motive to engage themselves in the Cause of *Christ*, but what arose from the most firm and absolute Persuasion of his divine Power evidenced by those Miracles of which they were themselves Eye-witnesses ; let us at present

sent only consider how impracticable it would have been for them, to have carried on such an Imposture, supposing that they had attempted it. That the Persons upon whom these Cures are said to have been wrought could have no Confederacy with *Jesus* has been shewn already, and is farther evident from hence, that whatever Reasons there are to suppose a Confederacy in these particular Cases under Consideration, they will as well hold with Respect to all the rest. But will you say, that all the Persons recorded in the Gospels as cured by our Saviour were in Confederacy with him to deceive the rest of the World? Where is the Sense of it? It is plain from the History, that *Jesus* performed his Cures upon Persons of all Ranks and in all Places casually as he happened of them in his Travels; and there is hardly an Instance to be given of any of them, who can upon any reasonable Grounds be presumed to have had any other Knowledge of him than what they had received from the common Reports of him as a Prophet, mighty in Word and Deed. What Room then is there to suppose a Confederacy with these Persons? Or what Notion can any one frame of a Plot in which such Multitudes, both of Men and Women in distant Places were concerned? The Confederacy then (if there was a Confederacy) must needs be confined to *Jesus* only, and some

few of his Disciples as Actors in it ; and a Confederacy it was against the whole *Jewish* Nation, threatening Nothing less, in their Opinion, than the Subversion of their Religion, and the total Abolition of the Law of *Moses*, to which they were addicted even to Superstition. And what Course do they take to carry on the Cheat ? Why in the very Country, where the whole Scene of the Transaction was to lye, *Jesus* is extolled as a Prophet, and as proving his Mission by such Cures as were never before heard of, in which Account the Diseases cured, and the Manner of the Cure, are for the most Part specified, as also the Places where the Persons lived upon whom these Cures were wrought, with many other particular Circumstances. For Instance, at *Jerusalem*, at the Feast of the Passover, he cures a Man that had been lame eight and thirty Years, by bidding him arise and walk. In *Galilee* in one of their Synagogues on the Sabbath Day ; he restores a Man that had a withered Hand, by bidding him stretch it forth. At *Capernaum* he heals a *Centurion's* Servant, who was sick of the Palsy, only by speaking a Word ; and cures a Nobleman's Son of a Fever. At *Bethsaida* he restores a Blindman to his Sight, &c. These and abundance more such Instances are reported of him ; in Consequence of which, *Jesus* and his Disciples gain Credit every Day among the People,

People, who come over in great Numbers to their Party, and yet, it seems, not one Word of these Reports was true ! It is to no Purpose to distinguish here and say, that some of them might be true. For if you can believe one, you may as well believe the rest ; and if one was a Cheat, they were all Cheats. But can any one believe this ? Suppose that some body at this Time a Day, should pretend a Commission from God, to set up a new Religion in Opposition to Christianity, and to countenance his Pretensions, should say, that at *London* he cured an Alderman's Son of Fits : At *St. Albans*, a Gentleman's Servant of a broken Leg : At *Dover*, restored a blind Man to his Sight, and so on. Is it possible that such a Pretender as this should gain Credit ? Would not every Mortal think himself concerned to make strict Examination, whether these Reports were true or not ? Would not the People in every Place, to which appeal was made, testify that no such Things were ever seen or heard of among them ? And would not the Impostor, instead of gaining Profelytes be exposed, and grow contemptible in the Eyes of the People ? The Gentleman with whom I am now concerned, has been pleased to take Notice of the extream Tendernefs and Sensibility of the Clergy, when any Attempt is made upon Religion. This I hope is no Fault. All Men are, or ought to be, tender of
their

their Religion ; and as easy a Matter as he thinks it to be to gain the Reputation of a Wonder-Worker, should he make the Experiment upon his Countrymen in Favour of his new mystical Sect, he would soon find his Mistake. I can readily enough apprehend, how easy it is to impose upon the vulgar in many Cases ; and that Men of Craft and Artifice may make the World believe strange Things of them, where Mankind is not enough interested in the Affair, to make it worth the while to take Pains in examining into the Bottom of their Pretensions. But that in a Matter of the last Importance, where the Appeals to publick Facts were so frequent ; and the Subject of these Appeals was of such a Sort, as all Mankind were capable to judge of, a Cheat should successfully have been carried on ; with me surpasses all reasonable Apprehension.

I have given you, in a few Words, the Evidence, by which this Part of the Gospel History is supported ; and whether the Objections produced by Mr. *W.* are sufficient to outweigh it, let any reasonable Person judge. There is one general Mistake, upon which the Gentleman sets out, and perpetually dwells in considering these Cases : It is this ; That
** if our Saviour had intended that any rational Argument for his divine Authority — should be*

** Second Discourse, p. 4, 5.*

urged from his Miraculous Healing Power ; the Diseases which he cured, would have been accurately described, and his Manner of Operation so cautiously expressed, that we might have been sure the Work was supernatural, and out of the Power of Art and Nature to perform. But on the contrary, he tells us, that the best and the greatest Miracles of Jesus — are so blindly and lamely, and imperfectly reported, as that by Reasonings upon the Letter of the Stories of them, they may be dwindled away, and reduced to no Wonders. As to the Manner in which these Cures were wrought, it is impossible that there can be any Exception against it. All that Jesus ever did in these Cases was to speak a Word, or to lay his Hands upon the Diseased, or to use some outward Application, evidently of no Significancy, in any other Sense, than as it was intended to give Evidence of his Power, upon which the Cure instantly and immediately followed. Now if Diseases, real Diseases, were cured in such a Manner as this, it will be the greatest Absurdity in the World to Question, Whether the Operation was supernatural, and out of the Power of Art and Nature to perform. Art here is none, and Nature affords no such Instances as these. The only Point then, is whether the Diseases were real ; and this it seems we cannot know unless those Diseases had been accurately described. You see now upon what

Terms this Gentleman would have been willing to accept the Gospel. I have shewn you before, in treating upon the *Resurrection Miracles*, that what he expected was that the Evangelists should have given us the History of the Lives of all Persons on whom *Jesus* wrought a Cure. Now it seems this is not sufficient, unless, with the History of their Lives, we had likewise a History of their Diseases, and the New Testament had contained as great a Variety of Cases as the Books of *Hippocrates*! What Sense there is in this, let all Mankind judge. Lay down but this one Principle that the Evangelists were Persons of Credit, and you need nothing more. What if they were not exactly skill'd in Symptoms and Signs? Does not every Countryman know when his Neighbour is lame or blind, or mad, or has the Dropsy? And even in secret Diseases is not there a Way of coming at a Satisfactory Knowledge of them either by the Relation of the Persons themselves, or of those about them? There can be no Question, but that the Evangelists had recourse to all these Methods so far as they were needful. What Occasion then could there be for any such accurate Description of Diseases as this Gentleman calls for? It is enough that **THEY** had the common Evidences in such Cases that the Distempers were real. And to say that we will not believe them upon their Testimony, is to give

give up the Gospel all at once upon the most weak and absurd of all Principles, *viz.* That it is unreasonable to admit any thing as Truth, of which we are not Witnesses ourselves. It is this, I fear, that lies at the Bottom of all this Gentleman's Cavils at our Saviour's Cures. He tells us, that * *if the Evangelists had told us of Men, that wanted one or both their Legs—— and how Jesus commanded Nature to extend itself, to the entire Reparation of such Defects, here would have been stupendous Miracles indeed, which no Scepticism or Infidelity could have cavilled at.* If he Means that he would have been convinced by such a Report, I much question the Truth of what he says. There is, as he observes, *no SUCH Miracle recorded in the Gospel*; but we can shew him greater Things. Instances we have of dead Men raised to Life again, and yet Scepticism and Infidelity can cavil at these, notwithstanding the common Evidences of Death have been set forth beyond all reasonable Exception. The Gentleman it seems understands what it is to want a Leg; and does he not understand what it is to be *dead* as well? Yes; but he denies that any such Thing was done as raising the Dead to Life. And might he not as easily deny any other Fact? What Credit then could the Gospel have gained, with him, from the most minute and circum-

* *ibid.*

stantial Description of Diseases that could have been given? So that the Matter at last must rest here. Either the Evangelists are credible Witnesses, or they are not. If you confess that they are; you have all you want; and the most indistinct Accounts of Cures wrought by our Saviour, may be admitted as Evidences for the Truth of the Gospel. But if you will hold it out against Sense and Reason, that they are not credible Witnesses; all Accounts, whether distinct or indistinct, are alike, and this is a Degree of Infidelity for which there is no Remedy.

And now I have done with this Point, and likewise with that Part of the Controversy which concerns the Credibility of the Scripture History. There are yet four or five Miracles excepted against by this Gentleman which I have not considered, but concerning these I have little to add to what has been already observed by other Writers.

F I N I S.



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